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CROSSROADS GUITAR!

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GUITAR WORLD

GUITAR & BASS

TRANSCRIPTIONS

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& BILLY STRINGS**

"SITTIN' ON TOP
OF THE WORLD"

THE SWEET

"THE BALLROOM BLITZ"

SLAYER

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WOODSHED

VOL. 42 | NO. 6 | JUNE 2021

'CROSSROADS' TURNS 35

I RECEIVE A lot of Sounding Board letters and Defenders of the Faith submissions from *Guitar World* readers of the *Crossroads* generation — people who, like me, probably saw *Crossroads* at least three times when it came out in 1986. Therefore, I'd bet decent money (the price of a used Charvel Pro Mod San Dimas, for instance) that a healthy percentage of you will get a kick out of Eric Kirkland's truly engrossing feature, "Chasing a Devil's Tale: A Quest to Solve the Mysteries Behind Steve Vai's Enigmatic *Crossroads* Jackson Guitar — the Most Famous Guitar That Was Never Heard," which starts on page 62. The story, which is timed for the 35th anniversary of the film, documents Kirkland's two-decade-long odyssey to track down the guitar that Vai plays — and drops — in the film; it then pivots to Kirkland's quest to perfectly replicate that devilish candy red sparkle axe.

Before I started editing the feature, I watched *Crossroads* for the first time in a few years. I couldn't help but notice the same thing I noticed back in '86: the fact that, although the movie celebrates the blues in all its forms — musicians, myths, legends and music — the film's protagonist, Eugene Martone (played by a Tele-wielding Ralph Macchio) has to play something other than blues to win the head-cutting contest in the film's most famous scene. It's a blues film where classical-inspired music saves the day. Am I the only one who thinks that's odd? P.S., sorry for the spoiler, but come on, the movie came out in 1986!

Anyway, *Crossroads* is a fun, generation-defining movie (and hey, it's got Steve Vai in it!), so if you haven't seen it in a while, it's probably time to revisit it. Truth be told, you'll probably want to watch it again after reading Kirkland's feature.

MY TYPE OF TYPE: I'd like to give a shout out to Steve Mitchell, who designed the eye-catching custom "Greta Van Fleet" typeface on our cover, and to Mixie von Bormann, who designed said cover. I am shouting right now!



DAMIAN FANELLI
Editor-in-Chief

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SOUNDING BOARD

Got something you want to say? **EMAIL US AT:** GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com



Some Quality

Page Pages

After reading the first few pages of your latest Jimmy Page interview [March 2021], I thought, “Oh, wow — more of the same old thing!” But then I got to Brad Tolinski’s feature about Black Beauty, Page’s lost-and-found 1960 Les Paul Custom, and I was blown away. It had everything — mystery, drama, cool photos! I laughed, I cried, it became a part of me! Also, for anyone who hasn’t given it a shot yet, the Page lesson on page 58 is useful, even if you don’t care about Led Zeppelin. And now the bad news: In the Mr. Bungle feature, Mercyful Fate (my favorite band) is referenced several times, but you spell it “Merciful Fate” every time. Do you need a copy editor? Anyway, keep up the great work!

— Douglas Powell

Making the

Very Best of It

Rather than stay pissy about the ongoing pandemic and lockdown, I decided to make use of the time in a constructive way. My wife suggested I clean out the basement... and I did! I took all my old GW magazines and built a database of artists/songs since I've had my subscription, which started in



1990. I also put them in containers by year, and when I want to work on a song, I can check my database and easily find which issue I need. During this exercise, I found I was missing about 14 issues (likely due to moves over the years), so I was on a hunt to find the missing magazines. I'm happy to say I now have every issue from 1990 through today. As a bonus, I was able to find the very first issue from July 1980, which I'll frame and hang on the wall. Next up, finding the guitars that were advertised in the December 1990 issue; I already have a JB Player and Aria Pro, and I've got my eyes on a Robin and Treker, but no luck on a Rose so far! Keep up the great work. I'll sign up for another 30 years.

— Sean Jarnagin

Ben Harper:

Lapping It Up

The interview with Ben Harper [March 2021] was the last thing I read after reading everything else in the issue. Even though I'm a rock guitarist who plays a little side, I thought the interview would be too technical with lap steel info. Instead, I read about Ben's upbringing, his influences and his passion for his music. Little bits of guitar stuff, which was nice. Great article emphasizing that music is

not only made with instruments,
but by inspired artists.

— Terry Kempler

Sneakin' in

Some Cipollina!

Thank you for the article about John Cipollina in the Holiday 2020 issue. His younger brother is Mario Cipollina, founding bass player for Huey Lewis and the News. He's also a friend of mine; I met him in a restaurant in Buffalo.

— Allan Wallaert

Hope you won't mind my bending your ear on John Cipollina. I was a teenager in SF and saw these guys many times at the Avalon and Fillmore. My friend Ralph actually lived a couple doors down from the band's house on 18th Street in SF. That was also the street the 33 Ashbury bus ran on — the one that would take us over the hill to the Haight. One time I was in Sausalito across the bay and just happened to come upon Quicksilver Messenger Service playing a free show where the boat houses were. They were also passing out free ice cream. I'm pretty sure they also played for free in The Panhandle in SF. You never knew who was going to show up there; I also saw Jimi play there right after he did Monterey Pop. I saw him that same night at the Fillmore. That was in June 1967. It was a magical time to be alive, and I feel fortunate to have been able to witness it all. Thanks.

— *Randall Thomasson*

Three EVH Cheers!

I've been a *GW* subscriber since '04 and a Van Halen fan since '87. Both have been life-altering. But what really impressed me was your selection of Van Halen songs [in the February 2021 issue]. All three are true Van Halen epics. Absolutely Vantastic!

— Craig Sonnenberg

A Call from Paul

Says it All

Having watched many videos featuring Mr. Paul Reed Smith, I can tell he's passionate about making guitars. However, I recently watched "Long Distance: Paul calls John Mayer" on YouTube and was disappointed by something Paul said. Toward the end of the video, John asks a question: "Finish this sentence: Hey, guitar manufacturers, cool it with the blank" and Paul's response is "bad guitars." He went on to say, "Buy a bad guitar and the kid gets frustrated and gives up because the guitar won't do its job," which is the part I found disappointing.

I wrote a letter to Paul saying I admired his work but found this comment disappointing as I don't feel PRS guitars fit beginner budgets (even the SE series) and that it's better for a kid to be able to play a guitar, any guitar, than to wait to afford a guitar at the PRS price point. I didn't expect a response. I mean, maybe an email from their customer service team thanking me for writing. But...

On Friday, Paul called me! I'm just an average guy from North East England and Paul Reed Smith took the time to call me to discuss my letter. I want everyone to know what a genuine guy he is with real humility and a passion for all things guitar. He thanked me for my letter and for my support of PRS and explained that although it may not be too clear in the video, by "bad" guitars he didn't mean "cheap" guitars. He added: "It hurts me when I see guitars being made to make money — and not being made to be good guitars."

The point is, Paul bothered to call me personally and I want everyone to know they can purchase PRS Guitars with absolute confidence in their products, thanks to Paul's sheer dedication.

— Grant Owen

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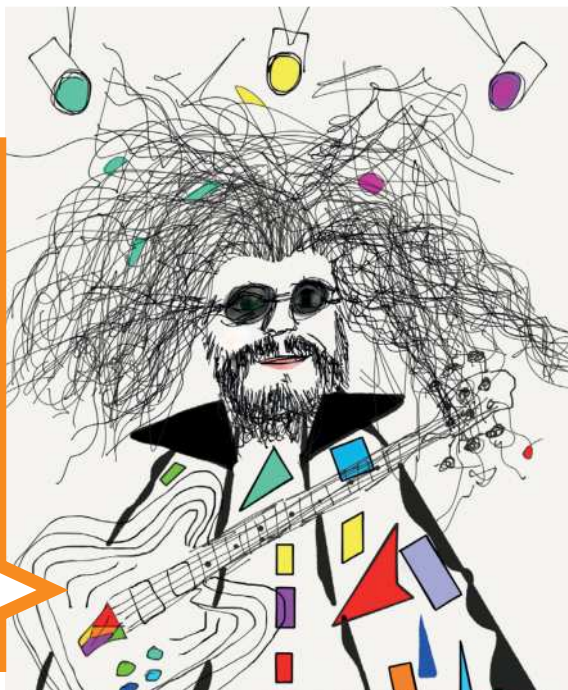


READER ART

OF THE MONTH

If you've created a drawing, painting or sketch of your favorite guitarist and would like to see it in an upcoming issue of *Guitar World*, email GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com with a scan of the image!

Also, please let us know if you'd like us to share it on Instagram!



JIM JAMES BY ROBERT BOSTON



TOM PETTY BY WAYNE HUSBAND

DEFENDERS ⚡ of the Faith



Michael Luna

AGE: 53

HOMETOWN: Sacramento, CA

GUITARS: Gibson Les Paul, Agile Les Paul, Harley Benton SG, Gibson SG

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Tesla "Modern Day Cowboy," Great White "Once Bitten Twice Shy," Billy Idol "Rebel Yell," Van Halen "Somebody Get Me a Doctor"

GEAR I WANT MOST: Kemper amp head



Linda Valley

AGE: 60

HOMETOWN: Seabeck, WA

GUITARS: Stratocaster, Custom Les Paul, FrankenSquier, Ibanez bass, Breedlove acoustic

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Stray Cats "Gene and Eddie," B.B. King "The Thrill Is Gone," Alice Cooper "Is It My Body," Green Day "Holiday"

GEAR I WANT MOST: Grestch 2657 and a Rudolph Schenker-signed Flying V



Dean Cramer

AGE: 53

HOMETOWN: Music City, VA (Round Hill, VA, actually...)

GUITARS: Gibson Les Pauls, Hamer Standard, Fender Telecaster, PRS Singlecut

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: My SO LOW band's originals, plus "Jessie's Girl," "Africa" and Queen stuff

GEAR I WANT MOST: An amp head that can do it all (Does anyone have one of those?) and a great-sounding 2x12 cab that can really move air like a 4x12



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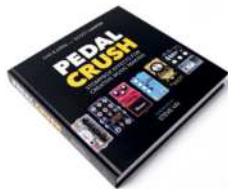
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Damon Johnson

ON THE HARD-ROCKING
BATTLE LESSONS, THE FORMER
BLACK STAR RIDERS/ALICE
COOPER/THIN LIZZY GUITARIST
ESTABLISHES HIMSELF
AS A FORCE OF ONE

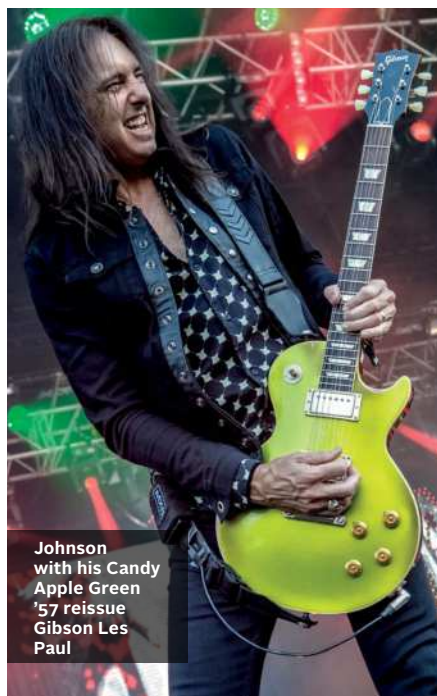
By Jeff Kitts

▶ FOR THE BETTER part of 30 years, Damon Johnson has cultivated the type of illustrious, star-studded career most professional guitarists only dream about. His resume speaks for itself: founding member of Brother Cane in the early Nineties, Alice Cooper band member in the late 2000s, Black Star Riders guitarist in the 2010s, touring guitarist for Thin Lizzy from 2011 to 2013 and songwriter/musician on albums by Stevie Nicks, Skid Row, Faith Hill, Ted Nugent, Carlos Santana and Sammy Hagar, among others. Since 2010, Johnson has also maintained a successful career as a solo artist — and that is where we find the versatile guitarist these days, putting the hired-gun life behind him and fully committed to going it alone.

“I just felt like it was time for me to chart my own course,” says the 56-year-old Nashville resident. “I need to be the 1. I need to be in charge of my calendar. I need to be the one to make the decisions that for so many years had been made for me. I love to play and I →

Former Thin Lizzy guitarist Damon Johnson — “I just felt like it was time for me to chart my own course”





Johnson with his Candy Apple Green '57 reissue Gibson Les Paul

love having a bunch of tour dates and traveling and all of that — but I don't love doing it 230 days out of the year anymore. There's a lot of stuff I've missed because I was out on tour with a band lugging a Les Paul case through some airport in Stuttgart, Germany." *[Laughs]*

Johnson's electricity as a solo artist is in full effect across every track on his latest solo effort, *Battle Lessons*, a no-nonsense, hard-rocking affair on his own Double Dragon imprint label that showcases his triple-threat talent as singer, songwriter and guitarist. The album was recorded in three different stages between February and October 2020 and funded primarily through a successful Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign.

"I don't have thousands and thousands of fans," says Johnson, "but the little fanbase that I do have is very passionate and incredibly supportive." In addition to the usual CD and vinyl configurations, the campaign also offered such tiered perks as a \$300 round of golf with the guitarist ("My time with Alice Cooper definitely turbocharged

my love of golf") and a \$2,500 house concert that one fan has already scooped up. "I love those things. I love knocking on somebody's door and they've got that expression on their face and they've got their neighbors over and they bring in food and they make me feel like I'm James Taylor or Bono or something — it's a great experience."

On *Battle Lessons*, Johnson churned out the majority of guitar parts on two Gibson Les Pauls: his black Custom and his Candy Apple Green '57 reissue, the latter of which he calls "the best-sounding Les Paul I've ever had." Amps were a mixed bag that included his own 100-watt Marshall and various amps provided by ace producer Nick Raskulinecz, including a Soldano, a Hiwatt, an Orange and a Friedman. But *Battle Lessons* is not an album brimming with sonic experimentation — it's an album that's chock full of good vibes, solid riffs, blazing solos and hooky choruses. And through it all, it's obvious that Johnson is having a blast playing these songs.

"I just feel the same joy and energy and enthusiasm that I felt as a teenager listening to *Highway to Hell* or Van Halen albums one through five, or Aerosmith or Thin Lizzy or so many others," he says. "I was shameless in listening to those bands to kind of influence the direction of the writing of some of these songs. How many times did I listen to 'I'm the One' or 'On Fire' from that debut Van Halen album until I finally said, 'I want to write a song like that.'"

Speaking of Van Halen, there's one moment on the record where the mood dips and takes a somber turn, and rightfully so; upon hearing of Eddie Van Halen's death in early October 2020, Johnson dusted off an old track of his called "Love Is All You Left Behind" and completed it as a tribute to his fallen guitar hero.

"I was fully focused on just making this a badass, balls-to-the-wall rock record, and then Eddie passed away," he recalls. "We were all celebrating him and the impact he had on all of us, and watching all the videos being posted on social media, I just saw that

big smile of his, and I was moved to pull that song out of the vault, finish it, and add it to the record."



"I need to be the boss. I need to be in charge of my calendar. I need to be the one to make the decisions that for so many years had been made for me"



WHAT'S ON MY PLAYLIST



KIRK FLETCHER

1

The Dixie Hummingbirds,
"Beside of a Neighbor"

The guitarist, Howard Carroll, influenced so many players. The solo is so clear and articulate; it definitely changed things for me after I nailed it.

2

Prince,
"Let's Go Crazy"

In the mid Eighties, you didn't hear too much wah on Black radio — or even screaming guitars — but Prince brought a lot of things together.

3

B.B. King,
"Night Life" (Blues Is King)

It's just heart and soul and everything that's great in the world, because it's just pure soul. Every note tells a story about his life and his struggles, joys, sadness and happiness.

4

Larry Carlton,
"Bubble Shuffle"

A lot of Larry's background shows in the solo; you hear him swinging those phrases so hard, and his love for the blues is undeniably present. I have a special connection with this album — it's one of the first I bought with my allowance as a kid.

5

Tom Scott and the L.A. Express,
"Love Poem"

When I was in Charlie Musselwhite's band, I'd sometimes drive to the Bay Area from L.A. to start the tour and play this album on my trip every time. Robben Ford plays the most beautiful lead acoustic guitar fills, and that inspired me to dig deeper into the bigger picture of making music and finding my own voice.

KIRK FLETCHER'S NEW ALBUM, *MY BLUES PATHWAY*, IS OUT NOW



Tone Tome

MEET *PEDAL CRUSH*, A NEW BOOK FOR THAT STOMPBOX FIEND INSIDE ALL OF US

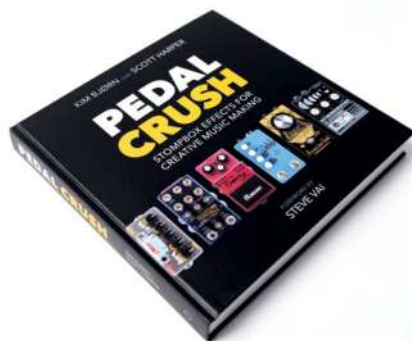
By Brad Angle

▶ “EFFECTS PEDALS ARE to the guitarist what paint is to the artist. They are the colors that a guitarist mixes together and use to paint the audio tapestries of their sonic expressions...”

That’s Steve Vai — master sonic artist in his own right — setting the stage for *Pedal Crush*, a new 376-page hardcover coffee-table book by authors Kim Bjørn (*Patch & Tweak with Moog*, *Push Turn Move*) and Scott Harper (of YouTube demo channel Knobs) that explores the joyful mysteries of stompbox effects.

Throughout *Pedal Crush*, Bjørn and Harper present “the story of pedals ... part history, part science and part art” by examining more than 800 popular and notable pedals. *Pedal Crush* smartly starts the reader off with the basics (stompbox anatomy, amplification, effects chain, pedalboards) before graduating to more advanced topics grouped under six sonic headings: Gain, Dynamics, Frequency, Time, Modulation and Pitch.

Pedal Crush is a behemoth, for sure, and its information is vast. But thankfully the authors’ thoughtful, systematic approach — and the book’s immaculately designed layout and full-color illustrations and photography — results in a clear, accessible and informative tome that stays true to Bjørn and Harper’s



“What Steve Vai says in the foreword — that effect pedals are to the guitarist what paint is to the artist — is just so true”

overall guiding principle to create something practical that “inspire[s] you to use pedals better.”

To that end, *Pedal Crush* also includes

more than 50 interviews with pedal creators (from ZVEX’s Zach Vex to Robert Keeley of Keeley Electronics), studio gurus (“Evil” Joe Barresi) and taste-making guitarists (Radiohead’s Ed O’Brien, Wilco’s Nels Cline, Noveller’s Sarah Lipstate) who share their keen insights into the stompboxes that we know, love and often covet: from essentials like the Ibanez Tube Screamer and EHX Deluxe Memory Man to boutique boxes like Death By Audio’s Reverberation Machine and EarthQuaker Devices’ Fuzz Master General and beyond.

“There are so many tips... that it’s hard to choose,” says Bjørn when asked what creative tidbit most surprised him. “What Steve Vai says in the foreword — that effect pedals are to the guitarist what paint is to the artist — is just so true. Add to this the insight from Ed O’Brien that for him it’s never about the guitar, but about the guitar *within* the song.

“I’d like to be brave and say *Pedal Crush* is a must-have for any guitarist who wants to get better at their pedal-game,” he continues, “or even just get new inspiration for their next sonic adventure...”

Pedal Crush is available through Bjørn’s boutique publishing house Bjooks (bjooks.com).

IMPORTANT SAFETY ALERT: FIRE HAZARD REGARDING RELAY® G10 TRANSMITTER



Corrective Action required immediately for Relay G10, Relay G10S, and Relay G10T wireless products purchased prior to March 2020.

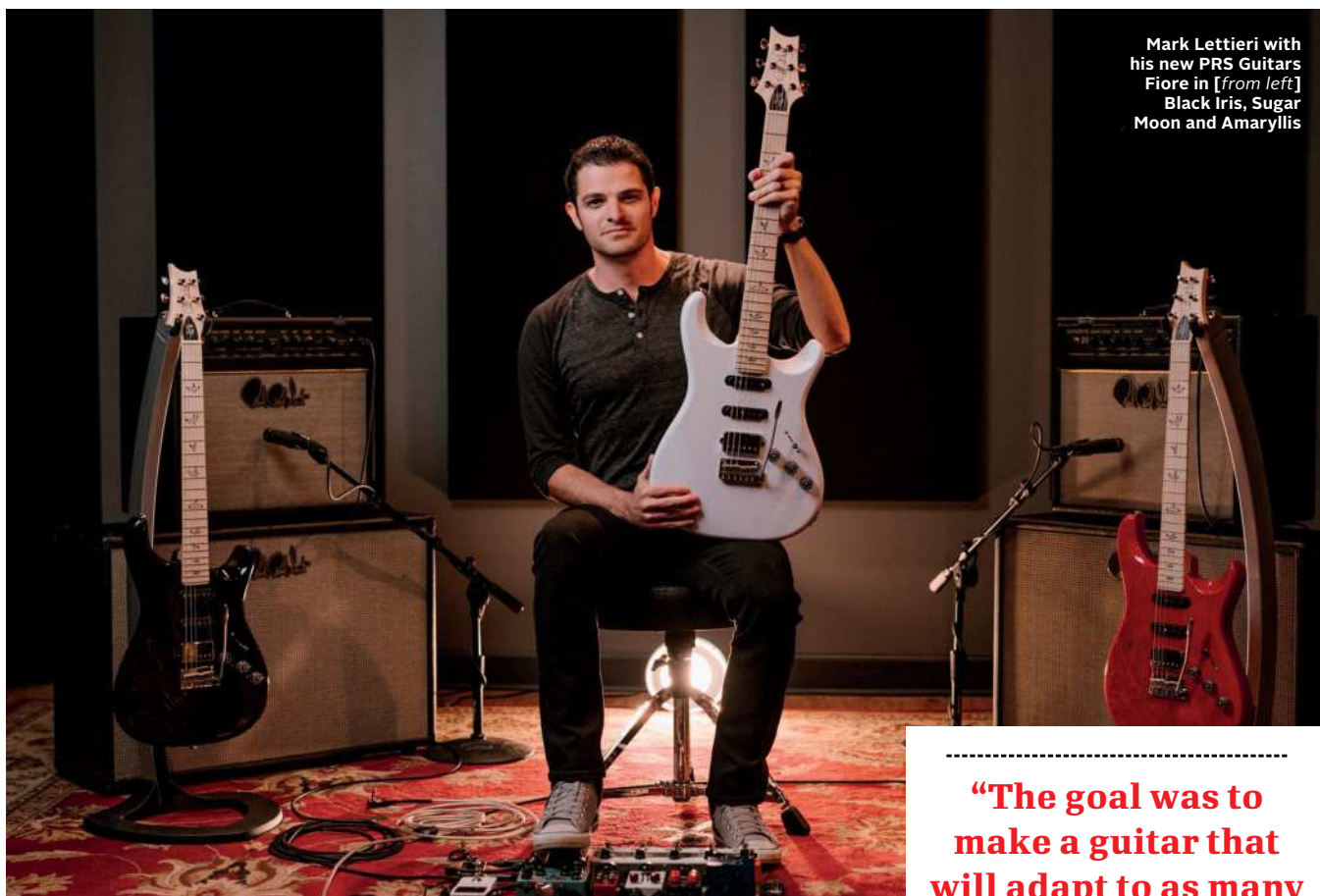
Several instances of extreme overheating and a risk of fire presented by the Relay G10T wireless transmitter have been reported since the product was introduced in 2016. All instances of overheating reportedly occurred during charging.

In March 2020, Line 6 issued a “recall-to-repair” with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The recall to repair is designed to prevent overheating and the risk of fire, and simply requires users to install a firmware update, updating to v1.06. It takes about five minutes to complete this process.



line6.com/g10t-update





Mark Lettieri with his new PRS Guitars Fiore in [from left] Black Iris, Sugar Moon and Amaryllis

Mark Lettieri

THE IN-DEMAND SNARKY PUPPY/FEARLESS FLYERS GUITARIST DISCUSSES HIS NEW “DOES EVERYTHING AT 100 PERCENT” SIGNATURE GUITAR, THE PRS FIORE

By Richard Bienstock

▶ MARK LETTIERI IS one of current music's most in-demand — and also versatile — guitar players. From his work with jazz-funk-fusion-rock-world-music collective Snarky Puppy and the all-star Vulfpeck offshoot the Fearless Flyers, to his own highly varied solo efforts and playing for everyone from Erykah Badu, Nelly and Eminem to David Crosby, Kirk Franklin and Dave Chappelle, the Fort Worth, Texas-based guitarist is clearly adept at burning up the fretboard in a variety of genres and styles.

And so it's no surprise that when it came to designing his first-ever signature model — the new PRS Fiore — he went for a guitar that was capable of doing a little of everything.

Or, make that, a lot of everything. “It really is kind of a ‘do everything’ guitar,” Lettieri says, and then laughs. “But not in a way where it does everything at, like, 75 percent. It does everything at 100 percent.”

Indeed it does. Lettieri created the guitar with PRS from the ground up, down to cus-

tom Fiore pickups and even a new body shape that's beveled and balanced to his exact specifications. “It has a way of kind of bringing all the elements together right where you need them to be,” he says of the design.

Other Lettieri-requested appointments include a swamp ash body, maple neck and fingerboard, two-point steel tremolo and 25.5-inch scale. As for those pickups, Lettieri, who says he's always been an “SSH type of player,” characterizes the Fiore single coils in the neck and middle positions as big and “oval” sounding, and compares the bridge humbucker to PRS's 58/15 design, but with a bit more output to “push distorted tones over the edge.”

The tonal options, meanwhile, are seemingly endless, with a five-way selector switch and push/pull knobs on each tone control that make it possible to activate the three pickups individually or in any combination (including all three together), or run the humbucker in series or parallel.

“The goal was to make a guitar that will

“The goal was to make a guitar that will adapt to as many things as the player wants it to adapt to. In a way, the Fiore is a blank slate; when you play it you're not going to hear the guitar — you're going to hear yourself”

adapt to as many things as the player wants it to adapt to,” Lettieri says. “In a way the Fiore is a blank slate; when you play it you're not going to hear the guitar — you're going to hear yourself.”

You'll also hear Lettieri if you pick up his newest release, *Deep: The Baritone Sessions, Volume 2*. Alongside the titular baritone guitar, Lettieri used the new Fiori for plenty of melodic and lead work on the record. “Most of the sections are built around a baritone-riff kind of groove, but then there's all sorts of little sparkles, and a lot of that's the PRS,” he says. “It just has this full range and flexibility. So yeah, the Fiore made it into the recording studio, real quick.”



Jimmy James [far left]
in action with the Delvon
Lamarr Organ Trio

Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio

THE VINTAGE COOL OF GUITARIST JIMMY JAMES

By Alan di Perna

► **"THE GUITAR IS my voice,"** says Seattle-based axeman Jimmy James. "I don't really sing, so my guitar is a representation of who I am."

James' guitar can be heard in full cry on *I Told You So*, the new album by the Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio. The disc's nine instrumental tracks are drenched in the classic spirit of Sixties-era Stax Records and the soul-jazz stylings of Hammond B3 masters like Jimmy Smith and Brother Jack McDuff. Lamarr kicks funky, fluid bass lines on his organ's bass pedals while simultaneously functioning as the group's featured soloist.

But the trio format also allows ample space for James to shine. With a vintage, 1964 Silvertone archtop as his main guitar, he segues effortlessly between supple, deep-fried rhythms and searing leads. His command of the classic r&b, funk and soul-jazz idioms is both prodigious and heartfelt. Where does it all come from?

"My mother's records," James laughs. "The first tune that made me love the guitar was 'My Girl' by the Temptations and also

'I Second that Emotion' by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles. Even though I wasn't born in that era, it spoke to me like no other. When I was in kindergarten, the songs I loved to hear were 'Respect' by Aretha Franklin, 'Who's Making Love' by Johnny Taylor and stuff by Chuck Berry, James Brown, Bo Diddley, Jackie Wilson, Bobby 'Blue' Bland... My friends didn't get it."

Born Jabrille Williams, James took a stage name that's also steeped in music history — one that was also used by Seattle's most famous guitar man.

"For me, the name Jimmy James is a tribute to three people," he says: "Jimi Hendrix, of course, from my neck of the woods. But also James Brown and [Motown bassist] James Jamerson."

James also performs with another Seattle group, a big, eight-piece horn band called the True Loves. But the intimate dynamics of Lamarr's organ trio offer a degree of improvisatory freedom that the guitarist deeply appreciates.

"Any time we play or write a new tune,

"Any time we play or write a new tune, it's an adventure. We may not know where we're going, or if we're coming back. But we're gonna go out there anyway. That's the way music should be"

— JIMMY JAMES

it's always an adventure," he says. "We may not know where we're going, or if we're even coming back. But we're gonna go out there anyway. That's the way music should be."

IT'S IN MY BLOOD

BRANDON ELLIS
THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER

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Addictively Unstable

TETRARCH'S DIAMOND ROWE AND JOSH FORE ARE MORE THAN WILLING TO TAKE YOU BACK TO THE GOLDEN ERA OF NU-METAL

By Adam Kovac

▶ THEY SAY THAT those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. But what if the history in question was awesome? It was just a quarter century ago that angsty 20-somethings in tracksuits, creatively dyed hair and enough eyebrow piercings to install a zipper onto ruled not just the rock charts, but the pop charts. Korn's Jonathan Davis was on MTV's *Total Request Live*. Stained albums sold millions of copies. Things were so crazy that even a band like Trapt could be taken seriously. For what might've been the last time, heavy metal ruled the airwaves.

And then, just as quickly as they came into the spotlight, the nu-metal bands were out in the cold. A select few, like Linkin Park and Slipknot, adapted. Others, too numerous to time, became punchlines.

But movements, from bell bottom jeans to disco to even the fluorescent nightmare that was the Eighties, have a way of coming back. Tetrarch remembers those heady days of angsty metal climbing the charts all too well.

"When we were growing up, our favorite bands were from that era. The Disturbeds and Linkin Parks and Slipknots and Korn's were bands that could be very heavy but also very melodically driven. Their fans could sing along with the songs but still be in the pits. That resonates with me a lot," says lead guitarist Diamond Rowe. "We're never going to be the heaviest band in the room. We're never going to be the softest band in the room. But we want to write songs that connect with people, that are heavy and you can bang your head to it but you can also sing along to it and you can relate to it."

Armed with some ESP guitars and *Unstable*, their brand-new second album, the Atlanta-bred foursome are doing their part to bring the hallmarks of nu-metal — chunky, drop-D verses, lead guitar lines doused in a heavy layer of effects, choruses so sharply catchy you could cut your life into pieces on them — back to the forefront of rock.

If the world is ready for that once familiar-sound to get invented, you have to give credit to Rowe and her co-guitarist/lead singer Josh Fore for being ahead of the curve. Tetrarch have been at this for a while — the band has been together since high school and put out their first EP way back in 2013. For almost a

decade, they've been building up their song-writing chops, working on their live shows and building a fanbase through the tried-and-true method of non-stop touring.

The crazy thing is, up until now, they've been doing it all themselves. *Freak*, Tetrarch's 2018 debut album, was self-released. For *Unstable*, they're ready to take that success up to the next level with the power of their new label, the hard rock powerhouse Napalm Records, behind them.

Not that they're ready to give up their hard-earned independence. The new album was recorded in February 2020, before their deal was signed, so *Unstable* is fully their baby.

"We definitely had a lot of labels coming after us and we're very picky in wanting to find a partner that saw the same vision as us and put as much effort as we were going to put in," Fore says.

Given the timing of *Unstable's* release on what is hopefully the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems to be a fortuitous partnership. The road, where Tetrarch thrives, is still not an option for promoting the new album. Yet the band is optimistic about the future. Despite the extra downtime, they're still hard at work, writing new material and working on plans to shoot as many music videos as they can.

"This past year, a lot of bands were struggling because they couldn't be on the road. And for us, it's insane, we probably had the biggest year as a band that we've ever had," Rowe says.

There was a reason nu-metal had so much commercial success in its day: the genre's biggest hits had hooks for days. Tetrarch have learned that lesson well: they eschew blast beats, preferring syncopated rhythms that flirt with being downright funky. Rowe's lead work is focused more on melody and atmosphere than on show-off-y virtuoticism.

Their continued success in the face of a globally catastrophic situation could be chalked up to the fact that their songs are just damn catchy. Fore can sound as pissed off as anybody on a verse, but he knows how to make an anthemic chorus absolutely soar, too.

The nu-metal formula Tetrarch is so inspired by is essentially classic metal with a twist, so it makes sense that the same goes for



Tetrarch's Diamond Rowe
[left] and Josh Fore



the band's gear. On *Unstable*, both Rowe and Fore have taken to using EVH amps (EL34 for her, 5153 for him). "I love something that's, like, super-high gain. I'm just a gain junkie, I love my gain, but not to compensate for not being a good player, and finding an amp that can do that but has a ton of clarity as well was awesome to find."

While Fore prefers a more minimalist approach to his rig ("Tube screamer, amp, cab, noise suppressor, I'm good to go," he says), Rowe dabbles more frequently in the effects realm, though her pedalboard has yet to reach the NASA control room level of some of her role models from the early 2000s.

"There's one effect people hear all the time; it's on our song 'Freak,' so we call it the Freak Tone. It's kind of a similar version to what Head uses a lot in Korn. I use a Univibe, a chorus, a delay and an overdrive. I use that effect all over the place and the Whammy... you'd think I just discovered the Whammy this year, I have so many Whammy parts on this new record," Rowe says.

When talking about Tetrarch's ascending place in the metal world, there's an elephant in the room that needs to be discussed: the fact is, Rowe is one of the few Black women holding down a spot in a genre that may be slowly diversifying, but is still predominantly male and white. Articles about her tend to have headlines like "Meet Diamond Rowe, the guitarist repping Black women in metal." To attribute the success of Rowe's band to her race and gender would be an insult to her skills as a musician and to the band as a whole. Tetrarch have put in their time. And

yet to deny that image and novelty play a role in marketing a band would be plain silly.

"It's something that brings attention to my band that maybe people who wouldn't usually pay attention, do pay attention," Rowe says. "And every band has to have something different about them to turn heads in the beginning sometimes, and I just look at it as like a blessing in disguise. And I'm very humbled. I didn't set out with that goal in mind, but I'm more than happy to take the lead on it."

Whether she asked for it or not, to be turned into that kind of a figurehead, especially in an age where politics has infiltrated all aspects of culture, is a huge ask, but Rowe has managed to keep a level head.

"It sounds like I don't care, but it's not that. It's just that I try not to let any of that cloud my mind because if I do, it can bring a lot of pressure on you and it can give you some anxiety and make you feel like you have the weight of the world on your shoulders," she says.

It helps that Rowe has bandmates like Fore, who recognize that what makes her unique isn't just her race or gender, but her ability to play the absolute shit out of a six-string.

"There's always something about bands that kind of blow up or do bigger, whatever, that there's always something different, whether it's musically, whether it's the attitude of the members," Fore says. "It's something I've embraced, and I've actually told her over the years to embrace it more. She's always shied away from the fact that she is so different. She just wants to be known as a guitar player and she has the chops to do that. But I tell her all the time, 'You're special, you're very different.' And that's something that's very cool."

What makes Rowe special can be heard all over *Unstable* — the little melody lines and textured runs that harken back to the last golden age of metal, when loud guitars could compete with pop as a cultural force. Bringing gain-filled amps back to radio? Now that would be special.

"I'm honestly just a guitar player," she says. "I play guitar. I love heavy music. I love heavy guitar. And that's the reason I started doing this. And that's the reason I'll always do it." "I'm going non-stop here, man!"

**"We want to write songs that
connect with people, that
are heavy and you can bang
your head to it but you can also
sing along to it and you can
relate to it"**

— DIAMOND ROWE



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Richie Kotzen [left] and Adrian Smith; as it turned out, Kotzen was a massive Iron Maiden fan, and he jumped at the chance to jam with one of his idols

"I IMAGINE IF YOU PAIRED
RITCHIE BLACKMORE AND **YNGWIE
MALMSTEEN**, IT WOULD BE AN
EXPLOSION — THEY'D JUST GO UP
AGAINST EACH OTHER. BUT RICHIE
AND I BLENDED QUITE EASILY"
— ADRIAN SMITH



GLORY ROAD

IRON MAIDEN'S ADRIAN SMITH TEAMS UP WITH RICHIE KOTZEN TO TAKE A BLUESY, HARD-ROCKING SIDE TRIP

BY JOE BOSSO, PHOTOS BY JOHN McMURTRIE

IRON MAIDEN LEGEND

I Adrian Smith wasn't looking to collaborate with another guitarist, but several years ago he and his wife, Nathalie, went to see Richie Kotzen perform in London, and what they saw impressed them. "Richie was terrific. Right away, I could sense that he and I were on the same wavelength," Smith recalls. "My wife thought so, too. She started coaxing me — 'You should get together and play with him.'"

As it turned out, Kotzen was a massive Iron Maiden fan, and he jumped at the chance to jam with one of his idols. "We played Bad Company, Deep Purple, Humble Pie, Johnny Winter, Free — stuff like that," he remembers. "We bonded really quickly on classic hard rock and blues-rock, but what was really cool was when we started singing. We both realized our voices sounded really good together."

For Smith, this was a major "aha" moment. Although he started in the business as a singer-guitarist and has demonstrated his vocal chops in short-lived side bands such as ASAP and Psycho Motel, his opportunities to sing in Iron Maiden have been few and far between. "I've always loved to sing, so it was really exciting to fall

in with Richie," he says. "As guitarists and singers, we're very equally matched."

Before long, jams turned into songwriting sessions and, ultimately, the two headed to the Turks & Caicos Islands to record. Billing themselves as Smith/Kotzen, the duo has released their eponymous debut. It's a tight album (nine songs that don't wear out their welcome) that blends rugged hard rock ("Taking My Chances"), R&B-tinged groovers ("Some People") and even a little blast of Nineties grunge ("You Don't Know Me") with boatloads of guitar shenanigans. "I think we make for a very interesting combination," Smith says. "If you're a fan of either of our work, I think you'll really get into it. And if you happen to like both of us, then you should *really* love it."

So... Smith/Kotzen. Why not Kotzen/Smith?

RICHIE KOTZEN: Uh-oh! You're trying to pit us against each other out of the gate. *[Laughs]*

ADRIAN SMITH: It's just the way it rolls off the tongue, I suppose. I mean, *somebody* had to go first. It's no more [of a] contribution from me than [from] him.

KOTZEN: Frankly, when I tried to say Kotzen/Smith, it felt clunky. Smith/Kotzen

sounds better. We toyed around with band names, but it's hard to come up with something new. At one point, I thought about Adrian Rich because it sounded like a Nashville artist with a cowboy hat.

You guys seem to be on the same wavelength musically. Are there any real areas where you differ?

KOTZEN: Classic rock is the real common ground. On the other side of it, Adrian loves American blues, and I grew up listening to a lot of R&B — the Four Tops, the Spinners, stuff like that.

SMITH: We both like the same singers — Paul Rodgers, for sure — although Richie is a big fan of Terence Trent D'Arby. He studied the technical side of singing more than I have, but I'm getting there.

As guitarists, can you pinpoint areas where one guy is stronger than the other?

SMITH: Well, I suppose certainly my playing leans more to the melodic side of things, whereas Richie's a bit more of a shredder. But he does have great feel and a sense of melody, so he's got that going for him. I don't know... It's just our nuances and our chemistry. We kind of push each other in



"[ADRIAN] IMMEDIATELY HAS AN IDEA HOW TO BUILD IT OR TAKE IT TO A NEW LEVEL. HE HAS THAT SKILL FROM BEING IN BANDS WITH TWO AND THREE GUITARISTS, WHEREAS I HEAR THINGS DIFFERENTLY" — RICHIE KOTZEN

different directions.

KOTZEN: I know people might think we're all about the guitar all the time, but often-times that's the last thing we're thinking about. We don't get together and say, "Check out this cool thing I can do." We'll usually say, "I've got an idea for a chorus" or "Listen to this melody." That's where we meet — as writers. But if we're talking guitar, one major thing Adrian brings to the table is his sense of counterpoint. I'll play something on the guitar, and he'll immediately have an idea how to build it or take it to a new level. He has that skill from being in bands with two and three guitarists, whereas I hear things differently.

Because you're usually a solo guitar guy.

KOTZEN: Exactly. I'm usually doing things alone, so that was a really great thing that Adrian brought to the table.

Can you break down your songwriting process?

SMITH: It's a really interesting collaboration. I'll play a riff and sing a verse, and Richie will be right there with the chorus. He's got great range, so he's good on choruses. But we'll swap ideas; sometimes I'll come up with middle eights. There were very few times when either of us got stumped.

KOTZEN: It's nothing we really had to work out. People are always saying to me, "Oh, you're like this guy. You ought to write with

him." So you give it a try and nothing clicks. When it does happen, though, it's very organic — I hate that word [Laughs]. Right away we could tell we were compatible. The first song we came up with was "Running." It happened very quickly and easily, and we thought, "Hey, this is pretty cool. Let's see if we can do another one."

"Taking My Chances" is an excellent example of the template you two established. Each guy gets to sing. You do a unison guitar solo, but then you both take solo spots.

SMITH: Exactly. That's a great example of swapping vocal and guitar lines. Yeah, that's the blueprint right there. There's a little bit of a fusion section that Richie came up with. He's got that whole fusion-rock-jazz thing from playing with Stanley Clarke. We threw that in there.

KOTZEN: That happened without us even discussing it. But what was cool was, Adrian started playing that riff, and I immediately jumped behind the drums. We jammed in my garage like two kids. I put on a click track so I could stay in time, and I recorded us. After four or five minutes, I went back in the control room and chopped up the performance and pulled out what I thought made sense for sections. Some of that stuff is actually on the master recording. There were times when it was us with two guitars; sometimes it was him on guitar

and me on piano. That time was us bashing around like kids.

Both of you stretch out the solos on "Scars" and "You Don't Know Me." Was there even a moment when you said, "OK, let's really give our guitar fans something here"?

SMITH: Not really. I think we were both aware that we didn't want to overdo it.

KOTZEN: I guess I could say it presented us with a foundation for lots of guitar playing, but it wasn't deliberate like, "Let's really show people what we can do." It was just what happened in the moment.

SMITH: Richie is more inclined to do that because that's what he does in his shows. He's a virtuoso and he'll go off, and he can do that. I'm more of a team player. I do a solo for 16 bars and that's it. It was fun to stretch out on "You Don't Know Me." Richie said, "Let's do like a 3/4 thing at the end and solo over that." It was the right time and the right place.

Was there any kind of trial and error in how you blended your guitar tones?

SMITH: I wouldn't say so. We sort of adapted to each other. A lot of my guitars and gear were locked away in England, so I used some of Richie's stuff. I imagine if you paired Ritchie Blackmore and Yngwie Malmsteen, it would be an explosion — they'd just go up against each other. But Richie and I blended quite easily. We had a laugh most days.

KOTZEN: I used the same signature Tele I've played for years. What was funny was, towards the end of the record I had a couple solos to do. Adrian's guitars were all ready to go, so I asked him if I could use one. I picked up one of his signature Jacksons with a locking tremolo system and a Floyd Rose — something I haven't used in ages. I started to play this thing, I'm grabbing the bar and I'm doing this and that. It was hysterical. I listened to it and thought, "This sounds like an 18-year-old Richie Kotzen." It took me back to how I sounded before I started playing Telecasters.

Once bands get hit the road again, do you think you two will tour?

KOTZEN: We made this record thinking that we'd be touring right now. Then COVID hit and now nobody can tour. It's tricky — he's in Iron Maiden and I've got my solo thing going. Touring is an open question, and nobody knows when that'll happen.

SMITH: We're in the same boat as a lot of people, so we don't know when we could tour. I wouldn't rule it out in the future, though. I think we'd both love to do it. **GW**

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BORN FOR ONE THING

Joe Duplantier details the themes, tones and influences that led to *Fortitude*, **GOJIRA**'s cinematic, hard-hitting and uplifting new album (plus songcraft, Death, Whammy pedals and that fine-looking mahogany Charvel...)

STORY BY
Brad Angle

PHOTO BY
Gabrielle Duplantier



Gojira's Joe
Duplantier with his
signature Charvel
Pro-Mod San Dimas
Style 2 HH Mahogany



FOR A

generation of young headbangers, **GOJIRA** are the new titans of groove metal: progressive, heavy-hitting riff giants continuing in the lineage of Metallica, Sepultura, Pantera, Lamb of God and others. And just like the six-string legends that preceded them — Hetfield, Cavalera, Dimebag and more — central to the French band's success is a modern metal rhythm guitar hero: Joe Duplantier. But good luck approaching him with that kind of praise.

"I'm *not* an awesome guitar player," retorts Duplantier, who's also Gojira's singer, producer and primary songwriter. "Sure, I have my technique and experience, but if you drop me in a room full of people jamming blues, it's gonna be a little difficult. There's going to be a *lot* of wrong notes in there. [Laughs] I don't have my scales down and I'm not a shredder or anything."

Duplantier's humility (and lack of blues chops) aside, what the musician does possess is that enviable, elusive holy grail for a guitarist: a unique voice. He calls it the "Gojira language," and it's instantly recognizable from the moment the cavalcade of distorted pick-scraped riffs, propulsive hammer-on rhythms and intoxicating atmospherics come roaring out of his amplifier.

Since Gojira formed in 1996 (first as Godzilla, before adopting their current moniker in 2001), their career has followed a steady trajectory upward. Duplantier and his band — which also includes his brother

Mario Duplantier on drums, bassist Jean-Michel Labadie and lead guitarist Christian Andreu — have continuously refined their musical chops and expanded their artistic vision across six albums. And with each one, from 2001's fierce debut *Terra Incognita* and 2005 breakout *From Mars to Sirius* to 2016's Grammy-nominated *Magma*, Gojira have earned more fans, more critical praise and more respect from many of their own heroes. Lamb of God's Randy Blythe was an early backer (and guested on 2008's *The Way of All Flesh*), and Metallica, Slipknot, Rammstein and others have personally recruited them as tour support.

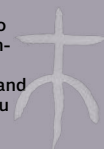
Gojira's seventh and latest record, *Fortitude*, is primed to be their biggest outing yet. The initial preview of the album arrived back in August 2020, when Gojira surprised dropped their first new song in four years, "Another World." Fans went wild — and the epic rager became an instant hit for the band and their first *Billboard*-charting single ever. Six months later, in February of

"THIS IS OUR LIFE. We have a purpose to create something artistic, SOMETHING TO SURVIVE FOR ETERNITY..."





[from left] Mario Duplantier, Jean-Michel Labadie, Joe Duplantier and Christian Andreu



this year, Gojira premiered *Fortitude*'s second punishing single, "Born for One Thing" — and its accompanying video topped a million views within days.

So, by all measures, expectations are pretty high ahead of the album's April release (via Roadrunner Records). But Duplantier isn't really sweating it. While he's definitely grateful for the external praise and accolades ("Being nominated for a Grammy was incredible!"), he says any pressure he's experiencing is self-administered — and stems from his own infinite ambitions. "People ask me, how do you deal with the pressure?" he says. "I'm like,

'Honey, this is nothing.' [Laughs] This pressure is *nothing* compared to the pressure I'm putting on myself. This is our life. We have a purpose to create something artistic, something to survive for *eternity*..."

Duplantier is discussing these points with *Guitar World* via Zoom from France. The guitarist was born in Paris but has called New York City home for some years — it's where he started his family and launched Silver Cord Studio in Queens (where he recorded and produced *Fortitude*). But because of the coronavirus, and NYC's cramped living situation, he's temporarily renting a house on

France's southwest coast, near Biarritz, to get some breathing room and be closer to his extended family and the rest of his band. Duplantier grew up in this same picturesque region along the Atlantic Ocean. It's where he learned to play guitar — through a deep-dive study of Metallica's catalog — and eventually hatched the idea for Gojira (after discovering his younger brother Mario's innate drumming skills). It's also the same area where he met his co-guitarist Christian Andreu.

Like Duplantier, Andreu was a Metallica obsessive growing up. "Kirk Hammett is the guy!" Andreu says today. "I watched



Christian Andreu with his new signature Jackson Pro Series Rhoads RRT

all of Metallica's concerts and videos and I told myself that's what I wanted to do." The young musician says he spent his teenage years alone in his room learning guitar with the help of tablature. His monastic dedication helped him develop a solid toolkit of technical skills, but he didn't grasp the full creative power of his instrument until he connected with Duplantier.

"I wasn't too bad, but when I met Joe, I discovered an artist," he recalls, "someone who puts his entire soul into every note... He taught me how to become one with my instrument. How to play with power and precision, being tight and exactly in time. It was always so natural for him."

Duplantier, for his part, remains a humble collaborator and politely deflects any six-string compliments as they arise. ("I'm mainly a producer — that's how I feel with music!") But his skills are indisputable — as is his continued commitment to use his platform to address issues close to his heart: namely, the survival of planet Earth. Environmental activism has been a major thematic element in Gojira's music from day one: from *Terra Incognita* (inspired by Duplantier's two-year experience living in a cabin without electricity) to *Magma* (a two-fold study in grief about the passing of the Duplantiers' mother and the potential ruination of the planet).

Fortitude continues Gojira's ecological mission — though this time the band rallied behind one additional unifying, and very humane, objective: uplifting people. "*Magma* was written during a very difficult period for the band," Andreu says. "It transcribed nostalgia, sadness and sometimes anger. *Fortitude* is much more focused on what's happening on our planet ... [and] that it is possible to change things."

"I wanted people who heard *Fortitude* not to feel sad or grey," Duplantier adds. "We wanted to come back with an album that was the opposite to *Magma*: very glowing, full of interesting things, musically rich with a message that inspires strength."

Music-wise, that directly translated to *Fortitude*'s gorgeous textures, cinematic grandeur and stunning riffs — where ambient moments lull the listener before an overwhelming tidal wave of guitar comes crashing down. Duplantier & Co. are still channeling some aspects of their forebears — from Metallica's mid-tempo stompers ("Sphinx") and Pantera's breakneck grooves ("Into the Storm") to Sepultura's pummeling world music ("Amazonia," "Born for One Thing") and Death's progressive extremity ("Another World"). But filtered through Gojira's unique creative lens, the final result, as heard on *Fortitude*, is

something entirely personal and undeniably fresh. To bring their sonic visions to life, Duplantier and Andreu rely on a mix of modern gear with vintage sensibilities.

Andreu's arsenal is built around his beloved Jackson Rhoads RR, of which he has two signature models: USA RR Signature Satin Black and Pro Series RRT Natural. "From the first time I tried that guitar, I never wanted to play anything else," he says. "It fits perfectly on me and I absolutely love the shape. It's as aggressive as it is beautiful."

For amplification, Andreu employs an EVH 5150 III Stealth, which he triples for Gojira's live shows. "One goes into a Box of Doom isolation cabinet, loaded with a Celestion 150-watt Redback speaker," he says. "The second goes to my live EVH cabinets onstage and the third goes to a Two Notes Torpedo Live digital load box and cab emulator, which serves as a spare." Andreu gets his distortion solely from his EVH amps and opts for an FX Loop featuring a TC Electronic Hall of Fame Reverb and Flashback Delay and a MXR Carbon Copy Analog Delay, plus a front-of-amp pedal chain that includes a Boss TU-3 tuner, Digi-tech Whammy and an MXR Smart Gate Pro.

Duplantier is also an EVH guy and has used a few different amplifiers over his career: from a Stealth to his current 5150 III EL34 head. The guitarist has also partnered with Charvel Guitars for years and is particularly enamored with their latest collab: the Joe Duplantier Signature Pro-Mod San Dimas Style 2 HH Mahogany. He used the T-style solidbody prototype on some of *Fortitude*, and throughout the pandemic has been jamming on the production version (which features his signature DiMarzio Fortitude bridge humbucker and a DiMarzio PAF 36th Anniversary at the neck). He also says that the ax has been handy to record demos for Archetype: Gojira — his new Neural DSP plugin that boasts three amps and a host of effects modeled after Duplantier's personal rig.

"In real life it would be impossible to achieve what you can with that plugin," he says. "You can explore each riff [in] a million possibilities... the flexibility is mind-blowing."

Both Duplantier and Andreu love their gear. Obviously, it's an essential tool to create their art — but, thankfully, it's also been one of a few welcomed distractions during the ongoing challenges and restrictions of the pandemic.

"I've gone through a few phases," says Andreu of life in the age of COVID. "In the beginning there was a bit of panic... After that, I tried to use my time cooking, garden-

ing and spending time with family... and of course playing guitar. Now, after one year, the pandemic... has pushed me to reflect on our future, our way of consuming... It's been a profound experience."

"I have mixed feelings about humanity," Duplantier adds with a laugh. "I don't know what's what. We live in a time where people question everything, all the conspiracy theories... It's a bit overwhelming... But I'm lucky enough to not work for a few months and to not be homeless. A lot of people lost that, and their jobs, which is disturbing... But for me, creatively, it's very good because I had a chance to reboot. And for a few months now it's been starting to itch: I want to play..."

In our far-ranging interview below, Duplantier breaks down for us the themes, techniques and influences behind *Fortitude*, reveals his ingenious trick to exorcise guitar "ghosts," explains why musicians should embrace the power of Death, and much more.

The pandemic has turned many people's lives inside out. How has it affected completing the new record?

Well, we were done with the record before the pandemic began. But we weren't done with the mixing, so I had to do that from a distance... From a producer standpoint, being away for that last step with [mixer] Andy Wallace — who I was so excited to work with — was kinda painful. But it went really smooth because he's excellent.

Touring has also ground to a halt. What's it been like being home so much?

I'm used to being on the road six months to a year... For the first time in my life I had an entire year off. It's a very special time. But it's challenging because, all of a sudden, you're all on top of each other! [Laughs] For me it was an incredible opportunity to keep track of my two kids... their little secrets and wiggly teeth and so on. [Laughs]

Do you think either of your children are budding musicians?

My six-year-old boy is playing drums. He picked it up like Mario did. I was very surprised... he's very inspired. My girl, who's eight, is playing piano, she sings, she comes up with lyrics. There's a lot of music going on between us for sure.

Beyond mixing *Fortitude*, and jamming with the kids, have you found much personal time to work on music during the pandemic?

This whole pandemic thing was a curse — of course, because all our gigs were canceled

— and a blessing. The good thing was it gave us time to try new things. I did some experiments at home. I did a Massive Attack cover, "Atlas Air," just for myself. I had a blast doing that... I need music in my life all the time. I am producing all sorts of little demos and stuff. We're about to jam with the band, and being in France makes it possible to gather and play together more often.

You mentioned Mario. Metal history provides quite a few examples of stellar guitar-drum sibling partnerships: the Cavaliers, the Van Halens, Dimebag and Vinnie Paul. Did you and your brother have an immediate musical connection?

Absolutely, right off the bat. When we first jammed it was incredible... I was maybe 17 and he was 12... All of a sudden we were playing music and there was no age difference anymore. We were two souls working together to create something. It was very striking. There was so much maturity already in this 12-year-old boy behind the drumkit.

What does that connection look like now after two-plus decades in Gojira?

We have a bunch of shortcuts, so we don't need to talk too much. Sometimes just a look. If he likes it, I know right away... We really understand each other in a very profound way, and to this day we've kept that.

Christian has been a part of Gojira's creative process for a long time. But did it take him a while to find his place?

Yes. But he has no ego, it's incredible. He says, "You know I'm here because I love you guys and what you do is amazing." And he doesn't like interviews very much because he feels like it's almost not his thing... But he wrote some key riffs on every album and he comes up with great intros and atmospheres. And Jean-Michel also has a way to approach his lines that is very interesting and often not what we would imagine. We complete each other pretty gracefully.

You've said you wrote *Fortitude* hoping it would "inspire strength." What bands did that for you when you were younger?

Metallica was my crush when I was a teenager. I discovered heavy music through Metallica. I was listening to them almost exclusively for several years, starting with *Ride the Lightning*... I learned a lot listening to their albums.

You've also toured with Metallica. Did you learn any tricks watching them up close?

Of course. Every time we're watching Metallica — and all these bands that took

us on the road like Behemoth, In Flames, Lamb of God, Rammstein — we're always the geeks with our notebook taking notes. [Laughs] To give you a little technical thing: the whole ISO box thing we use on tour, we learned that from In Flames... The ISO box is a speaker in box, so you can crank your amp so it's not going to bleed onstage. It's a wonderful tool where you can really keep your microphone at the right distance to the speaker every night.

Let's talk about songcraft. Gojira really balance the assault. Not everything is turned to 11, which adds power to the riffs when they're eventually unleashed.

We're all about the dynamic... If there's going to be an intense moment, it's not necessarily the moment *itself* — but how you bring it. How you let things breathe and prepare, just like foreplay in the bedroom. It's all about giving some space and then boom! [Laughs]

We really like to sprinkle our albums with calmer songs... Then there's the production. I used to put six guitars — three on the left, three on the right — and you couldn't hear the guitar pick on the strings, just a big wall of sound. Yes, it's impressive, but then I'd listen to the System of a Down album *Mezmerize*, and I was mesmerized. [Laughs] Because it's raw as fuck, and there's little distortion. But that's what makes the whole thing super violent, because you *feel* the person playing the guitar and pounding the strings. Also when you listen to the old albums, like Black Sabbath or Led Zeppelin, you realize there's so much power there — and it crushes the other bands that have the distortion on 15, with active pickups and all that stuff. The power, I think, is in the dynamic of the sound and the structure. We're very pre-occupied with the dynamic of our songs in every way possible.

Fortitude's debut single, "Another World," contains a signature Gojira moment: the hammer-on rhythmic line. Is there any particular player who inspired that technique?

Hmm... that's a good question. It might be Death. Yeah, huge Death fan. *Spiritual Healing*, we took a lot from that record. And *Symbolic*. These albums are totally... I want to say underrated, but that's not the case because people who know these albums, they worship them. It's just a lot of people don't know about Death and Chuck Schuldiner and the talent of that guy. On "Another World" it's all on two strings and the pick is striking the string one time for two notes because of the hammer-on. And then

there's this very lyrical moment later: it's the same thing but without the palm mute choking the strings.

"Hold On" features a cool conversational thing between the multi-tracked vocals and the riff. Can you talk about that?

This part is very dear to my heart. I put a lot of effort to make it sound as vintage as possible while keeping the power of the song going. It's the only moment where I'm playing on the neck pickup. It gives it this extra weird vibe, because when you go from the bridge pickup to the neck it takes a second for the ear to get used to it because there's this phase change somehow... I also had fun with that solo. I was never into solos... So for the first time I'm like, Come on man you've got to come up with a solo! [Laughs] This song is interesting because there's one main theme we play all the way through and we have these alien moments happening, that old-school sort of bridge-pickup part and then the tapping solo.

Speaking of tapping, the guitar world lost a huge innovator last year with the passing of Edward Van Halen. Did you discover his playing as a kid, or was it only...

...Metallica, Death, Morbid Angel, Sepultura, Pantera, Machine Head! [Laughs] I come from a small area in France and just a few bands made their way to my local shop... I was never introduced to EVH or the other greats, even Black Sabbath. I had to discover them way later. I was a little late to the party, because I was listening to rap, like Public Enemy, and playing piano and classical music until I was 14 — when I discovered Metallica and it changed my world completely.

You mentioned Sepultura. I hear a bit of their vibe on "Amazonia."

Really? [Laughs] I'm not surprised, of course. It's practically a shout-out to Sepultura. *Arise*, *Chaos A.D.*, *Roots*... we grew up on that shit. At our first show in 1996, in the south of France in a small village, we played maybe 10 to 12 songs — and six of them were Sepultura covers.

"Fortitude" and "The Chant" channel a similar world-music spirit. Have you been investigating any other artists from that genre?

I am a huge fan of this multi-instrumentalist called Stephan Micas. He's pretty old now, he's from Germany... But I've never had one single conversation about this dude before! [Laughs] He's not very famous in the metal community, but he released 40 incredible, absolutely beautiful albums. Dead Can

"A LOT OF PEOPLE don't know about Death and Chuck Schuldiner and THE TALENT OF THAT GUY"



Dance is also an influence. Native American songs and melodies are also in my head — and I'm very worried about the future of all the indigenous people around the planet. And that's why on the cover of our album there's an indigenous warrior...

"The Chant" has a truly wild solo. Tell us about it.

I played the solo for "The Chant" on my first electric guitar. It was a Gibson Flying V that a friend of mine sold to me when I was a kid. There was a problem with the ground, and we found a solution: I attached an old string to the bridge and put the string in my mouth and it grounded it. [Laughs] For some reason there was a ghost in that guitar. There was this hum, so I put a leash on that guitar



Gojira — including Joe Duplantier [left] and bassist Jean-Michel Labadie — perform in the UK in 2016

and put it in my mouth when I was playing the solo. [Laughs] I had a blast.

You guys also sound like you were having fun with the Whammy pedal on “New Found.”

[Laughs] Whammy is so magical! We started using it on *Magma*. We’re having way too much fun with it; we can’t stop using it.

“Sphinx” showcases a pick-scrape technique that’s become a Gojira calling card. Can you describe what you’re doing?

My approach to guitar is very physical... but not sexual. [Laughs] I have a physical approach to instruments; sometimes I’ll pound on the guitar and it’ll go “boom” and

I’ll use that in a song. That technique wasn’t premeditated. It happened live on tour in 2002 or 2003. The catalyst... was the song “Embrace the World” [from 2003’s *The Link*]. Toward the end of the song there’s a riff with a guitar slide... When we were playing live, instead of using my left hand to recreate the slide, I wanted to use my right to see if I could simulate a similar sound. I was doing this weird movement with my right hand: scraping the skin of your thumb over the strings. If you have some distortion on, you will get that sound. But it’s basically the rubbing of human skin on electric guitars. [Laughs] ... The next album after that, *From Mars to Sirius*, it was all over it.

Fortitude was created during one of the

craziest years in modern history. Now that it’s wrapped, how would you say the album fits within Gojira’s body of work? Nicely. [Laughs]

[Laughs] Like a glove.

[Laughs] Like a glove! This album was different because we did way more songs than usual... maybe 20. It’s almost like I lost friends on the battlefield to get to the final 11. [Laughs] ... I’m extremely proud of this album. I’m not anxious at all about what people are going to think about it. First of all, I think they’re going to like it. But even if they don’t, I’m at peace with everything we did. We had fun, we tried some new stuff, and we used the Gojira language we’ve built over so many years. **GW**

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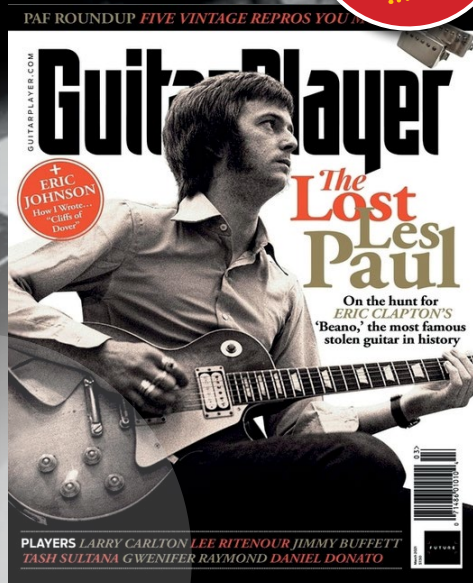
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GUITARIST JAKE KISZKA
AIMS TO FIND OUT.

GRETA VAN FLEET

♦ BY JOE BOSSO ♦
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“ART IS SUPPOSED TO ELICIT STRONG REACTIONS, ISN'T IT?”

Jake Kiszka asks rhetorically. The Greta Van Fleet guitarist is considering the extreme, diametrically opposed responses his band has received since they first topped radio playlists in 2017 with their single, “Highway Tune.” On the one side, there are those who have hailed the Michigan quartet as the brightest young band of this millennium and the red-hot shot of adrenaline that rock has sorely needed. On the other side, there are the detractors who have tagged the group as nothing more than competent yet shameless Led Zeppelin clones. It’s a “love ’em or hate ’em” proposition with little gray area in between.

After four years of it, Kiszka isn’t letting any such noise get to him; in fact, he takes a philosophical — and surprisingly welcoming — view of the band’s polarizing nature. “I actually think it’s a beautiful thing,” he says. “There’s something sort of perfect about having one or another direct response to what we’re doing. It’s the essential point, really. Music can affect somebody in a very loving, peaceful or inspirational way, or it can go the other way and you have a determined opposite reaction in which people are infuriated by it. I think that’s the objective of all artists.”

In the years since their arrival, the band (which also includes Kiszka’s two brothers — Josh on lead vocals, Sam on bass and keyboards — along with drummer Danny Wagner) has come a long way, issuing two EPs, *Black Smoke Rising* and *From the Fires*, as well as their 2018 full-length *Anthem of the Peaceful Army*, all of them brimming with rollicking riffs, hammer-of-the-gods-like rhythms and epic, high-register vocals. They’ve topped *Billboard* charts, collected a Grammy (for *From the Fires*) and toured the world several times. But along with their success, the band members have still been unable to shake the nagging perception that they’re simply Seventies FM-radio revivalists adopting a modern sheen.

“It’s somewhat perplexing,” Kiszka says. “I think one has to establish the fact that we are commonly referred to as a ‘classic rock band’ or a ‘throwback band’ to comment on that. I’ve always thought it would be really puzzling to try to identify ourselves in those ways, because I think we’re very much a product of our environment, politically and societally speaking. When I wake up tomorrow, I’m still going to be living in a world that surrounds me and influences me, and I think we’re contemporary in our flesh and blood.”

Which is another way of saying that he’s having none of it. “I think it has to do with



age, really,” Kiszka continues. “Critics are hard to press, in particular to the Zeppelin reference, which we’re humbled by. We’re honored by that affiliation, but again there’s a point within factions of society that are drawn to ignorant criticism. It’s just something we’ll never be a part of contributing to. The loud minority will never speak for the quiet majority. That’s something Joe Bonamassa mentioned to me once, and I believe it’s pretty accurate.”

He’s quick to point out that his guitar influences go far deeper than the hallowed axemen of British rock, rattling off names like Lightnin’ Hopkins, Elmore James, Robert Johnson, Lead Belly, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker and Howlin’ Wolf. “The list goes on,” he says. “Blues is at the heart of my dominant influences, and the same goes for the rest of the band. What we do and how we do it is very truthful to us.”

From the start, Greta Van Fleet came front-loaded with elevated expectations — crazy hype, even (“Can they save rock ‘n’ roll?” asked many a news headline). Thus far, the band has cleared each hurdle put in front of them, and now they face the challenge of following up their full-length debut

and the inevitable question: Can they do it again? “It feels as if we’re dealing with things that other artists would normally encounter a decade into their careers,” Kiszka says. “To be honest, we don’t feel a lot of pressure because we’re four guys who are creating what we want. I don’t think success is really a factor that plays into how we make our music. That’s on the back burner, I guess.”

The band’s new album, *The Battle at Garden’s Gate*, is bigger, grander and more ambitious than its predecessor, with each element — every gargantuan riff and whiz-bang solo, each majestic keyboard flourish and every foot-stomping rhythm — magnified to achieve maximum impact. The record’s first two singles offered a split-screen view of the band’s approach: “My Way, Soon” busts out of the gate with turbo-charged force, propelled by Kiszka’s tangled, Pete Townshend-esque lead-rhythm riffery. “Age of Machine” is a nearly seven-minute-long cosmic doozy, full of slippery guitar leads and dramatic vocal textures.

Throughout the rest of the album, the band explores a wide mix of moods and atmospheres. There are dark, symphonic rock ballads (“Broken Bells,” “Stardust Chords”) on which Kiszka shifts between scorching wah-drenched solos and unaffected blues-based leads, as well as a pair of arena-ready anthems (“Heat Above” and “Caravel”) where he bags the lead work altogether, choosing instead to employ the full range of his chordal abilities. “Light My Love” is a piano-based beauty that stands as the band’s first unabashed love song, but before anybody thinks the group has gone soft, they tear up the walls and anything else in their way on the adventurous, nine-minute album closer “The Weight of Dreams,” which features a sustained crescendo of Kiszka’s sparky fretboard business.

The Battle at Garden’s Gate was produced



“Critics are hard to press, in particular to the Led Zeppelin reference, which we’re humbled by.”

Greta Van Fleet's
Jake Kiszka with his
SG-shaped 1961 Gibson
Les Paul

by Greg Kurstin, who, aside from his recent work with the Foo Fighters, is more known for his chart-busting affiliations with Adele and Kelly Clarkson. However, Kiszka makes it clear that they weren't aiming to go pop. “When we sat down with Greg, we said, ‘We want to make an orgasmic, cinematic piece of rock ‘n’ roll,’ and his eyes just lit up,” he recalls. “He knew exactly what we were after, and he knew how to bring it out of us. If we played him three pre-chorus ideas, he would tell us which one was best, and he could explain why musically. That was really exciting because it was a learning experience.”

Music that operates on such a widescreen scale demands themes of equal substance, and *The Battle at Garden's Gate* doesn't skimp on weighty topics. Throughout the album, the band takes on social inequity, personal enlightenment, warfare, religion — not exactly party stuff. “It's a bit serious,” Kiszka admits. “I think that plays into our experiences up to this point. Traveling the world for the past three years, we're seeing things, different cultures. It's not all roses out there. You see someone mopping the floor after a show, and they find a piece of food on the floor and they eat it — it's things like that that we wanted to address, as well as this peace and love and unity bit.”

Do you guys plot out the future that much? Do you have a five-year plan?

We do, but not necessarily in terms of where we want to be, career-wise. I think we plot what we want to try to achieve musically, but of course that can change. I mean, it's hard to predict what will be influential at any given point. Everything's a moving target.

Since Greta Van Fleet came on the scene, there have been a few bands that also dabble in modern classic rock. Is there anybody out there that you look at?

The White Stripes were past pavers, in a sense. They were very influential from a blues standpoint. We listened to them in middle school. Gary Clark Jr. is another fantastic artist. There's the Black Keys and Cage the Elephant — they're fantastic.

Anybody newer?

It's difficult to say because I sort of dabble. I could pull up Spotify and name some groups I've been listening to, but they're kind of in the same world. I love the people we've toured with. We select who we tour with specifically because we enjoy their music. I love Ida Mae. I don't want to leave anyone out. We're all in the same boat. We're all paving a new path for our generation.

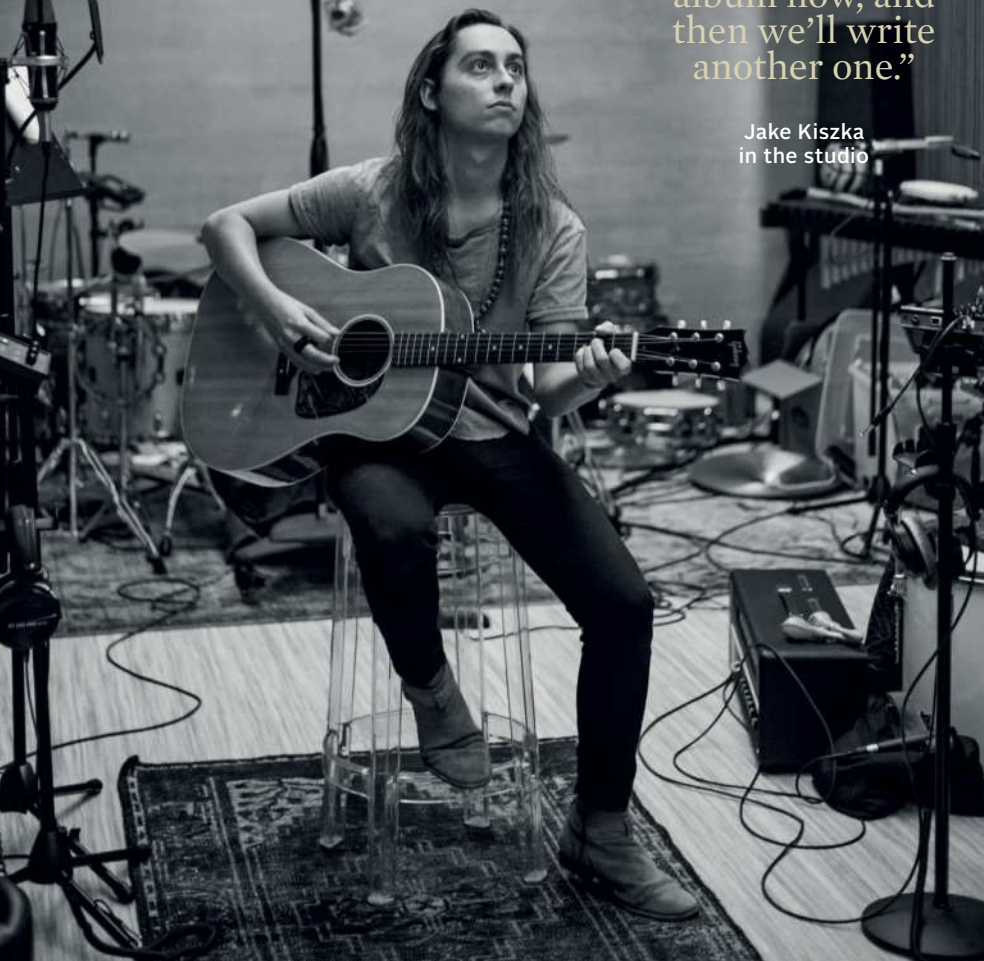
A band like AC/DC is revered for never





“Actually, I think the world needs music more than ever. So for us, the idea was to release this album now, and then we’ll write another one.”

Jake Kiszka
in the studio



changing. Other bands evolve stylistically, and some, like U2, have even changed their sound completely. Could you see Greta doing something radically different from what you are now?

That’s very interesting, and I’m glad we’re touching on it. We see ourselves as being very elastic. We like to change and we want to move in different ways. We can’t be stagnant musically — that would be death. I think I can say that each album we put out will be different from the previous one. There’s so much to cover, all the different types of music — folk, country, jazz, blues and rock ‘n’ roll. We’re influenced by all of it, and we

want to incorporate it into what we’re doing. I think we see ourselves as a group that can evolve and try new things. Changing what we do over time, yeah, I think that could be beautiful and inspiring. Artists shouldn’t be afraid to completely throw something out and try something else, but it can be difficult. It’s an interesting concept, for sure.

Are there any guitarists you’ve been listening to lately that might surprise people?

How contemporary do you want me to be?

As contemporary as you like.

OK. Well, I mentioned the White Stripes.

I’ve recently re-listened to their entire discography, so I’ve been focusing on Jack White. There’s another contemporary blues artist, Cedric Burnside, the grandson of R.L. Burnside. He put out an album, *Benton County Relic*, and it’s fantastic. It’s a really great contemporary blues album. Oh, and of course, I really like Chris Turpin from Ida Mae. His style is really cool; it’s sort of lighter folk and blues and rock ‘n’ roll. I like what he does with resonators.

In the wake of Eddie Van Halen’s passing, a lot of people have gone back and listened to his work. How about you?

I have, yeah. It always happens when somebody passes, how it can reinvigorate interest in their work. His whole career and the techniques he created — he’s such a dominant force. It’s crazy. When I was younger, I picked up on the tapping technique — I mean, everybody did. Everybody wanted to try to play like him. You know, we’ve been rehearsing, and we’ll pull out a Van Halen song. It’s such fun stuff, and when you play his riffs and you start tapping a solo, you can just feel his energy. It takes you back. You start to wonder what he was thinking at the time when he was creating all that music. He was amazing.

GVF recently moved to Nashville. Have you checked out the town’s players?

Well, we just moved there, so we’re still in a situation of isolation. We haven’t been able to really get around and jam with people. There’s so many really great musicians here. Before the pandemic, we’d watch some of these guys on Broadway, and they’re incredible. If you want to be challenged beyond realistic means, you move to Nashville. You can learn from what everybody’s doing; they’ve got such different techniques and have this depth of musical knowledge. It’s nothing like the small town we grew up in. There’s a scene here, but it’s no longer a country city — it’s a music city.

Do you sit down and try to work on various techniques? Do you work on speed or play to a metronome?

No, no. [Laughs] I couldn’t do that. I pick up the guitar, and whatever comes out that day, that’s what comes. I do play every day — the guitar’s a real extension of me — but mostly it’s to write something or to play something for somebody.

Do you have ruts? And if so, how do you bust out of them?

Oh, sure. I think everybody has ruts. It’s interesting, because you pick up the guitar and it’s like, “This sounds like something that’s becoming a song.” And then nothing

comes out of it that day. You sit there and think, “I should be able to finish this,” but for whatever reason it doesn’t happen. To me, that’s a rut, when nothing comes for a couple of days. It’s frustrating. I always find that there’s some way out of it, though, and the best way is to just be patient. Don’t give up, but don’t force it. If you continue to come back to it, something dawns. A lot of times, you think you’re in a rut, but it’s just part of the process. I’ve often used guitar phrases and things that I thought were nonsensical — it’s like they had no place until I just took a little time and let them be.

The band cut most of the new album in late 2019 expecting to tour throughout 2020. COVID-19 had other plans.

Yeah, who knew, right? By the time we came off the road in 2019, we were weary troubadours. We’d been touring a long time. So we made the record and thought, “We’ll release it and tour on and off throughout the coming year.” Then the pandemic hit, and it was like, “OK, now we have to re-evaluate everything.” It actually gave us more time to work on the record. We sat down and listened to it, and we came up with a couple more songs. Hopefully, that contributed to the album’s depth.

An observation about the album: You don’t overdo distortion. By that I mean your distortion doesn’t sound like a power tool; it sounds like classic-amp distortion.

That’s right. It’s very true to the amp and the guitar. I like when you can hear the inflection of the guitar; you can hear a silky, graceful sound, almost like a violin. I love that. It can be more authentic and transparent when you’re playing a little cleaner — you can hear little details. I work very hard to articulate chords and notes. All of that sensitivity and technicality gets lost when you have too much overdrive. You lose all the nuances of your tone. A lot of the players I like can be heard beyond their distortion. They knew just how much to use and how to control it. Jimi Hendrix used overdrive, but you could still hear his technique.

You could hear how hard his hands were hitting the strings.

Right. Exactly. I don’t want to lose that.

Your rhythm-lead riff on “My Way, Soon” reminds me of Pete Townshend. Fair enough?

Oh, yeah! My first real guitar was a Townshend SG with P90s in it. Pete was an early influencer. For a bunch of us boys growing up, we would just put on the Who, crank it and then run around like madmen. Pete is right in the British catalog of guitar heroes —

Clapton, Page, Beck.

I feel he’s sometimes underrated.

I totally agree, but I think he’s every bit as influential as those other guys. I’ve studied him quite a bit. From a tone standpoint, there’s a symbiotic relationship between him, the guitar and the amplifier. You can hear *him*. It’s the same as what we were saying about Eddie Van Halen: When you play a Van Halen riff, you can feel him. But as far as “My Way, Soon” goes, yeah, there’s some Townshend.

The guitar orchestration in “Broken Bells,” your symphonic mix of acoustics and electronics, it’s very Jimmy Page.

Definitely. There’s so many Zeppelin songs that start simply with an acoustic and then work into the heavier electrified sections. It’s folk and then it’s rock. The whole idea of “Broken Bells,” which was written two and a half, three years ago, started with just a phrase on the acoustic guitar. We put some vocals on it, and then when we came back to it and built it up. Originally, we thought it was perfect, but then everybody started saying, “It needs something. There’s no crescendo.”

The song itself wanted to be very linear. It goes up and up and up and up to this breaking point, and then we were like, “What now?” So we created this little turnaround with the 12-string, which I actually played on a double-neck acoustic Espana — really interesting guitar. From there it goes back to the electric. The crescendo comes with the solo and then the outro. It needed the big release.

Which is different from “Heat Above” and “Caravel.” They’ve got cool foundational riffs, but you hold back from solos. It’s as if you’re saying, “The riff is all you need.”

Precisely! I’m glad you picked up on that. I was really trying to make a point of that. On “Caravel,” when I crafted it, I was like, “This kind of speaks for itself in a certain way. It needs to be a prevalent counterpart to the other instrumentation.” It needed to fill its space, and it does. It didn’t need much around it. There’s other complexities: The bridge becomes really heavy, and there’s the pre-chorus where Josh is soloing in a sense. He’s taking the lead there, and it’s so beautiful. It’s a very dynamic touch, and then we go right back into that riff.

I have to bring up Page again. The riff to “Built by Nation” almost sounds like it could have come from *Physical Graffiti*. It’s very raw and sinister.

Yeah, I hear that. I’m using an octaver on that one. That riff needed an identifiable {continued on page 60}

GVF'S EADG

ELEVEN QUESTIONS WITH GRETA VAN FLEET'S FLEET-FINGERED BASS MAN, SAM KISZKA

When you were starting out, you were able to grow and make mistakes without a lot of people seeing you. Is it harder to evolve now that you have so many eyes on you?

That’s a good question. There aren’t an overwhelming number of groups that really experiment on stage. I know I’ll try out different things live, just to get a reaction. We’ll write parts while jamming. We’ve established this communication between us that allows us to jump in any direction and ride it for a while, and then we can get back to whatever we were doing. We’ve done that since we played little clubs and bars. It’s a little different doing it in front of 100 people versus 10,000 people, but you can’t let the pressure get to you. People want spontaneity — from that, you get authenticity.

Your two brothers do the flashy stuff; Jake is the high-profile guitar guy, while Josh is the lead singer. Do you ever feel a little overlooked?

Oh, absolutely! But I have a very firm understanding of what I do in the band. As the bass player, I create the marriage between guitar and drums. It’s like I’m the thing that holds it together. Bass is a funny thing: You don’t realize it’s there, but you know when it’s not. Don’t get me wrong, I love attention. In the early days of the band, I used to get upset because nobody was paying attention to me. I think that caused me to develop a playing style that’s a cross between rhythm and lead. I think some of that comes from listening to Jack Bruce in Cream. He was probably my biggest inspiration for bass playing. That whole band was a good example of three musicians working together to create a sound.

Are there any new bass players you’ve been listening to?

Not particularly, but I’ve been realizing what an incredible bass player Stevie Wonder is.

He’s kind of an incredible everything.

Talk about innate feel. Every musician should understand the importance of feel, but it especially applies to bassists. You can know all the notes and scales, which I don’t know [Laughs] ... but there has {continued on page 60}

[from left] Tyler Bryant & the
Shakedown's Graham Whitford,
Tyler Bryant and Caleb Crosby



♦ GUITAR WORLD ♦
♦ JUNE 2021 ♦ PAGE FIFTY-THREE ♦

THE NEW WAVE OF CLASSIC ROCK

RIFFS FOR DAYS!

OUR GUIDE TO 15 "NEW WAVE OF
CLASSIC ROCK" ACTS THAT ASPIRE
TO THE GREAT GUITAR HEIGHTS OF
THEIR FOREBEARS (OR SIMPLY,
15 KICKASS GUITAR BANDS
YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT!)

♦ BY BRAD ANGLE ♦
♦ PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON STOLTZFUS ♦



SOCAL ROCK 'N' ROLL CREW RIVAL SONS HAVE BEEN KICKING out the jams ever since they formed in 2009. So how, after six albums and a decade-plus in existence, did the four-piece find themselves entering 2021 as one of the forerunners of a new, surging musical movement dubbed the “New Wave of Classic Rock”?

“This type of sound is finding popularity as a kind of backlash to what we’ve been fed over the last 10 years,” says Rival Sons guitarist Scott Holiday. “Things move in cycles, and new rock ‘n’ roll — not alternative or metal, like a *real* rock ‘n’ roll sound — has been very hard to find over the last decade.”

Befitting the NWOCR (New Wave of Classic Rock) moniker, Rival Sons — along with other bands included in this budding genre like Greta Van Fleet, the Struts, Dirty Honey, Dorothy and more — perform music that harkens back to the seminal work of icons like Led Zeppelin, AC/DC, Aerosmith, Deep Purple, Cream and others. Like the masters, this new class of performers are creating hard-hitting, swaggering, riff-driven rock ‘n’ roll built around a core vocal-guitar-bass-drum configuration. Unlike these originals, as Holiday points out, the musical and cultural landscape the up-and-comers are entering hasn’t exactly been welcoming.

But the fickle nature of music trends — and rock’s shifting position in pop culture — is nothing new. Since rock ‘n’ roll first reared its dangerous, distorted grooves in the Fifties, the genre’s stature has risen and fallen repeatedly. And “Rock Is Dead” has been proclaimed by many critics, many times over the decades. But, generation after generation, there’s always a fresh class of kids picking up electric guitars and making an exciting racket — and new rock acts continue to fill clubs (in normal times), rise up the ranks and push the form forward.

What makes this current renaissance particularly interesting is that these bands are starting to experience mainstream crossover success and taking over prime cultural real estate that — for the better part of the last decade or two — has been largely occupied by hip-hop and radio pop. NWOCR bands are inking major-label deals, soundtracking superhero TV shows and Levi’s campaigns, performing at fashion shows and playing Coachella, topping the *Billboard* charts, receiving Grammy nods, earning millions of digital streams, attracting legions of worldwide fans and galvanizing a strong grassroots online community (many of whom

congregate on the popular New Wave of Classic Rock Facebook group).

The bands that make up the NWOCR scene are also a diverse bunch, both musically and philosophically. They’re exploring a range of styles — from bluesy and rootsy to glam, progressive and straight-up speaker-rattling rock — and tackling distinctly personal lyrical themes unique to their own experiences and world views. But one unifying thread unites them: Their sound is built on a firm foundation of guitar-based rock ‘n’ roll that’s full of big riffs, intoxicating grooves, spine-tingling vocals and stadium-sized ambitions.

“Much like the Nineties when ... bands were penned ‘grunge,’ you had a group of bands that honestly didn’t sound very similar or maybe didn’t even really share the same ethos, but they all were under that umbrella,” Holiday says. “It was probably frustrating and weird for all of them to be labeled under this one thing together, but they were better off for it in the end. It became a movement.”

“We embrace it,” says the Struts’ guitarist Adam Slack of the New Wave of Classic Rock label. “We do, however, stand by that we want to push the production of our music into the 21st century, not be carbon copies of the past.”

“Honestly, I don’t know where we fit in or don’t fit in!” says Dirty Honey’s John Notto. “But I do hope we’re carrying the torch of the rock ‘n’ roll that was fun, catchy, soulful, but still grimy and uncompromising. We don’t pressure ourselves to sound like any genre; we just want to add something to the conversation that our heroes started.”

In that spirit, we present 15 rising New Wave of Classic Rock acts that aspire to the great guitar heights of their forebears — bands that are offering up fresh takes on tried-and-true formulas, carrying the classic flame and illuminating the path forward for rock ‘n’ roll.

RIVAL SONS

SINCE EMERGING OUT of Long Beach, California, in 2009, Rival Sons have become one of the frontrunners of the classic-rock revival scene. Led by guitarist Scott Holi-

day’s searing riffs and singer/guitarist Jay Buchanan’s bluesy vocals, Rival Sons have cultivated a growing international fanbase and the respect of some top-tier classic acts: Deep Purple, Aerosmith and Black Sabbath have all tapped them as openers. Their sixth and latest full-length, 2019’s dynamic *Feral Roots*, was a level-up moment for the crew. The Grammy-nominated album was their first for Atlantic Records imprint Low Country Sound and featured the banging single “Do Your Worst” — which secured the Number One spot on *Billboard*’s Mainstream Rock Songs chart.

“Plenty of folks the world over... definitely are aching for new rock ‘n’ roll: not active rock, not metal, not alternative rock... rock ‘n’ roll. We’ve been here to give them just that,” Holiday says. “Don’t get me wrong — I love all those offshoots, and at any moment we may give you some of that in this band. But at the heart of Rival Sons is that soul-and-blues-based dirty garage-y rock ‘n’ roll. And we’re really good at delivering it.”

LISTEN NOW: “Do Your Worst,” “Pressure and Time”

CROWN LANDS

THIS CANADIAN DUO, featuring singer/drummer Cody Bowles and guitarist Kevin Comeau, exude Seventies hard-rock energy: from vintage clothes and shaggy hair to speaker-shaking blues riffs, Zep-esque loud/soft dynamics and a healthy dose of psychedelic vibes. They’ve released just one full-length, 2020’s *Crown Lands*, but the band has already gained some high-profile fans: Jack White and Primus have enlisted the young musicians as openers. Crown Lands are also using their platform for change. Bowles is half Mi’kmaq, an indigenous tribe from Nova Scotia, and the duo is committed to raising awareness about the marginalization of First Nations peoples, as heard on songs like “End of the Road.”

“We want to be a bit more fluid with the way we express our music,” Comeau says. “We have dynamics. We have a softer side we’re not afraid to embrace, and we have a weirder side.”

LISTEN NOW: “Mountain,” “End of the Road”



[from left] Dirty Honey's Justin Smolian, Marc LaBelle and John Notto perform in Detroit, February 10, 2020

DIRTY HONEY

IN 2019, LOS Angeles four-piece Dirty Honey made history with the release of their self-titled, self-released EP. When its anthemic, riff-filled single “When I’m Gone” hit Number One on *Billboard*’s Mainstream Rock Songs airplay chart, it marked the first time that pinnacle had been reached by an unsigned band. That achievement was the culmination of a whirlwind few years for the band that also saw Dirty Honey opening for Slash, the Who and Guns N’ Roses. But as far as Les Paul–wielding guitarist John Notto is concerned, the fun is just getting started. The band is readying a new record for 2021 that amplifies the statement they put forth on the debut EP and sees the crew “venturing [into] some new, exciting areas.”

“I think our combination of blues-based riffs, mixed with big choruses, and an overall atmosphere of a party going off the rails gives us a unique sound in today’s music,” Notto says. “There just aren’t many bands out there playing and writing the way we do. A lot of rock now is tight, heavily produced and dark in its mood. We are cavalier, fun,

uplifting and unapologetic about it.”

LISTEN NOW: “When I’m Gone,” “Rolling 7s”

LARKIN POE

NASHVILLE-BASED OUTFIT Larkin Poe, founded by multi-instrumentalist sisters Rebecca and Megan Lovell, have refined their rootsy Southern musical style since first bursting onto the scene with 2014’s *Kin*. The pair might be best known in blues circles (2018’s *Venom & Faith* received a Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Blues Album), but they’ve also got some classic-rock-worthy chops (aptly, CSNY, Queen and the Allman Brothers Band are among their formative influences). One listen to the huge riffs, burning slide licks and gospel-tinged harmonies of 2020’s hit single “She’s a Self Made Man” and you’ll get the picture.

“The guitar has been a journey of its own. It’s fascinating as a musician to approach the different ranges of an instrument,” says singer/guitarist Rebecca Lovell. “I find it fascinating to listen to Megan play slide and the way she expresses its vocal qualities. That’s

something I’ve been really moved by on the guitar — it has such an extensive range...”

LISTEN NOW: “She’s a Self Made Man,” “Black Betty”

STONEFIELD

HAILING FROM AUSTRALIA, Stonefield is the psychedelic, stoner-rock vehicle for the Findlay sisters: Amy (vocals/drums), Hannah (guitar), Holly (bass) and Sarah (keyboards/vocals). The group’s haunting, heady jams — like “Sleep” from 2019’s *Bent* — recall the Sabbath-y, Deep Purple end of the classic-rock spectrum: full of deep fuzz, lush keys and riffs for days. Stonefield aren’t just conjuring intense musical moments; they’re also confronting some heavy subject matter drawn from the Findlay sisters’ own lives.

“*[Bent]* is about our own experiences...” Amy says. “Songs about the fear of walking home alone at night, stories of what it’s like being an all-female band and the power of supporting one another. With that being the lyrical subject, the music that came out is definitely our heaviest.”

LISTEN NOW: “Sleep,” “Delusion”



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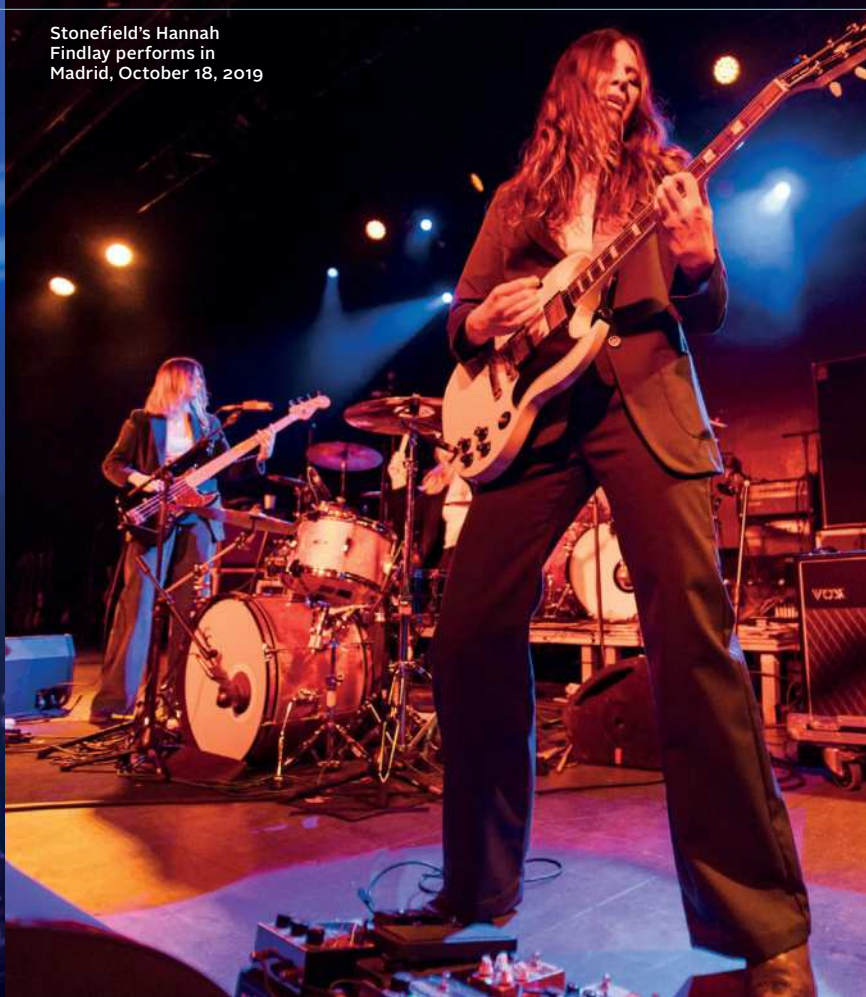
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Station guitarist Chris Lane (with his Jackson SL1) in action at NYC's Gramercy Theatre in 2018



Stonefield's Hannah Findlay performs in Madrid, October 18, 2019



NICK PERRI & THE UNDERGROUND THIEVES

NICK PERRI IS NO stranger to the music game. After getting his start in Philadelphia rockers Silvertide, the guitarist moved to Los Angeles, where he became an in-demand support player (for Perry Farrell, Shinedown and many others) and successful composer for commercials, soundtracks and more. (He also launched his own guitar company — Perri Ink Custom Guitars, makers of the Gypsy — along the way). But the guitarist/singer, who *Guitar World* last covered in our November 2019 issue, is poised to make his biggest move yet with new band the Underground Thieves, whose 2020 debut, *Sun Via*, showcased Perri flexing his well-honed skills on everything from funky blues rock (“Feeling Good”) to emotional, Pink Floyd-esque psychedelia (“Fall”) and more.

“Most of what you’re hearing me play through these days is a Les Paul, a Marshall JTM45 with Celestion Greenbacks, and a Dunlop Fuzz Face Distortion pedal,” says Perri of his simple, classic setup. “With that combo, I’m more satisfied with my tone than ever before.”

LISTEN NOW: “Feeling Good,” “5.0.1”

TYLER BRYANT & THE SHAKEDOWN

TEXAS-BORN, NASHVILLE-based guitarist Tyler Bryant has been shaking up the guitar world since his teens — when his preternatural blues skills earned him spots opening for icons including Jeff Beck, B.B. King and AC/DC. And Bryant’s hard-charging grooves, big riffs and bigger solos keep getting better with age — as heard on his group’s latest album, 2020’s *Pressure*. Fun facts: Bryant’s co-guitarist Graham Whitford is the son of Aerosmith guitarist Brad Whitford, and *Pressure* features a guest spot from Larkin Poe’s Rebecca Lovell — who also happens to be Bryant’s wife (For more about Larkin Poe, backtrack to page 55).

“Real rock ‘n’ roll, and roots music has always been there, but I think we’re moving back toward the mainstream with it,” says Bryant, last covered in the Slipknot-fronted September 2019 *Guitar World*. “We’re not changing anything we’re doing. We’ve been doing this since we started the band and we’ve been doing it regardless of what anybody tells us to do. The truth is, we just love real rock ‘n’ roll.”

LISTEN NOW: “On to the Next,” “Lipstick Wonder Woman”

DOROTHY

SIGNED TO JAY-Z’S Roc Nation, Dorothy are a Los Angeles rock act built around singer/namesake Dorothy Martin. Dorothy’s 2016 debut *ROCKISDEAD* most definitely made the case that it wasn’t (see gritty, catchy foot stompers “Raise Hell” and “Wicked Ones”) and its follow-up, 2018’s *28 Days in the Valley*, showcased the band adding even more classic-rock theatrics to the proceedings. Martin has collaborated with a number of guitarists over the years (including Nick Perri) and got a songwriting assist on *28 Days* from ex-4 Non Blondes singer/hit-maker Linda Perry (Cheap Trick, Dolly Parton). The Martin-Perry pairing resulted in a more diverse sound a la Jefferson Airplane and the Doors — filled with rich textures, howling guitars and Martin’s undeniable, soaring vocals. Dorothy’s third record, *Gifts from the Holy Ghost*, is due out later this year.

“We’re not trying to fit into a box,” Martin says. “We’re not trying to write songs we think should be on the radio. We just want to write good music. For me, the challenge is to be as honest as possible.”

LISTEN NOW: “Raise Hell,” “Who Do You Love”

Whitney Petty [left] and Molly Sides of Thunderpussy perform in Gorge, Washington, May 22, 2015

THE
NEW WAVE
OF CLASSIC
ROCK



THE STRUTS

SINCE FORMING IN 2012, England's the Struts have gained worldwide notoriety from their raucous live shows, hip-shaking grooves, propulsive riffs and catchy-as-hell glam-worthy choruses. Guitarist Adam Slack comes by the style honestly, as his formative six-string years were spent studying Nineties chart-toppers like Green Day and Oasis before getting "hooked" on the Seventies sounds of Slade, T. Rex and Mott the Hoople. The Struts' stadium-ready songs have already earned them prime spots opening for the Rolling Stones, the Who and Guns N' Roses. But the crew upped the ante with their third and latest album, 2020's *Strange Days* — a bombastic mix of rockers that pays homage to the hard-partying Eighties scene of their adopted home of L.A. and features all-star assists from guest guitarists Phil Collen of Def Leppard and Tom Morello.

"I think music is cyclical and I think it's about time people just went back to basics," Slack says. "I think music has been pushed to its boundaries of late and sometimes it's just good to come back to a few guys or gals in a garage turning amps on and making noise."

LISTEN NOW: "Could Have Been Me," "Body Talks"

JOYOUS WOLF

ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA'S Joyous Wolf have come a long way since 2014, when vocalist Nick Reese first met guitarist Blake Allard in the acoustic room at Guitar Center (where they would jam CCR's "Born on the Bayou"). In four short years, the group, rounded out by bassist Greg Braccio and drummer Robert Sodaro, dialed in their high-energy, hard-rocking sound (dig their killer 2018 cover of "Mississippi Queen") enough to ink a deal with Roadrunner Records. The Warner Music subsidiary promptly released 2019's *Place in Time* — a grunge-infused guitar workout featuring the indisputable jam "Mother Rebel" — and got them enviable bookings opening for Slash and Deep Purple.

"I'm definitely not reinventing the wheel plugging a Gibson into a Marshall," Allard says with a laugh. "But I will say the number one thing that I work toward and try to get better at every day is creating music that might give people a different *feeling* from a rock-influenced band ... or at the very least give them a great, fresh listening experience!"

LISTEN NOW: "Mother Rebel," "Said Too Much"

THUNDERPUSSY

FOUNDED BY EX-DEERHUNTER guitarist Whitney Petty, Thunderpussy are a Seattle-based four-piece — also featuring vocalist Molly Sides, bassist Leah Julius and drummer Ruby Dunphy — with a classic-rock spirit... and an unapologetic wild streak. Appropriately, their music recalls some OG rabble-rousers, from AC/DC and Led Zeppelin ("Never Know" and "Speed Queen" from their 2018 self-titled debut) to Jefferson Airplane (behold their pitch-perfect 2019 cover of "Somebody to Love"). Thunderpussy also boast one legit rock legend in their corner: not only did Pearl Jam's Mike McCready produce and play on debut single, "Velvet Noose," he also gave Petty her main ax: a Gibson McCready edition 1959 Les Paul.

"Rock 'n' roll is 100 percent in my bloodstream," Petty says, "and I have loved and digested so much classic rock over the years, there's just no way that my writing and sound are not influenced by it. I think we have tried to bring back some of that feel and style for sure. If it ain't broke — don't fix it. We are proud to keep the tradition alive."

LISTEN NOW: "Speed Queen," "Velvet Noose"

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SAM KISZKA

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to be something in your heart. It's not in the head. You're communicating through rhythm, which I suppose humans have been doing for thousands of years.

Was there anything about your sound you wanted to achieve that you didn't get right earlier?

On this album, each song is very different and has its own personality, so there was extensive experimentation, and I was always asking, "What does this need?" For something mellow and acoustic driven, I wanted the bass to almost appear invisible. As a sound, I thought Motown. The strings had to be dead and muted so I could blend with the bass drum. Other times, when the song is really driving, I just crank up the amp and I get the tone I need. It was all on a song-by-song basis.

On "Caravel," you double the main riff with Jake. Who generally comes up with an idea like that?

That kind of thing has always been there. It's very effective to double a part because that's riff rock 'n' roll. For a long time, if Jake dominated what was going on instrumentally, I wanted to do a counter melody to what he was doing. That didn't always work out, though. It's something of a crossroads, because I do like to jump around freely.

Are there any times when Jake says your playing is too busy?

All the time. [Laughs] But usually that's just live. In the studio, it translates better when I pull back, which is a little bit hilarious because we really loaded these tracks up. We were trying for a very cinematic album. Here's my thing: whenever I'm in doubt, I just watch Cream at the Royal Albert Hall in 1968. Most of the time they're all soloing at the same time. It's the most absurd sound, and it's just to-die-for a rock 'n' roll. So it all depends. If Josh is singing, and obviously the vocals are the most important element, I always try to support his vocal. But when Jake's taking a solo, I'll sometimes go a little bit off the rails.

The credits list the whole band as equal songwriters, but are there any tracks on which you were the guiding force?

My baby is "The Barbarians." It's not a bass song, but I came up with the melody. We were in a cabin just waking up; we were getting our coffee on, and I was playing a Mellotron. Jake looked over and was like, "What's that?" We wrote



"I think [Greta Van Fleet] are contemporary in our flesh and blood," says guitarist Jake Kiszka

GRETA VAN FLEET: BATTLE READY

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tonality to it that separates it from other things that I've done. I learned that Jack White uses a lot of octavers, and Neil Young used them for a lot of tones. I was listening to his soundtrack for the movie *Dead Man* when I was working on the song. So I plugged into an octaver and transformed the tone of the riff. So it's a mix of Jack White, Neil Young and Jimmy Page.

What guitars did you use on the record?

My 1961 Les Paul is the one I mainly used; it's got the SG shape. I had a lot of visits from friends who would bring instruments around. Greg had a couple of instruments and amplifiers that I used. One very interesting instrument turned up on "Broken Bells" — a factory black 1959 Gibson ES-335. There aren't a lot of them around. Keith Richards has one. Johnny Marr has one. So one got dropped off and we were looking at it, like, "Wow, it's an artifact!" So I used it on most of "Broken Bells." The solo is the 1961 Les Paul.

Any other guitars you want to mention?

On "The Barbarians," there's a solo in the beginning and a Middle Eastern-sounding solo in the bridge — that's a 1960 Fender Stratocaster. I never really used a Strat in the studio until now. What a powerful instrument. I also used a 1962 Telecaster and a 1954 Gibson Les Paul. Oh, and I played the solo on "Built by Nation" on an Epiphone Casino. That was a really cool guitar.

The double-neck Espana was amazing. It's a really rare guitar, but interestingly they're not expensive. There wasn't a big demand for it. I also used an Epiphone Texan — that was great. The necks on those guitars are perfect. I did a lot of the more technical acoustic stuff on the Texan

because the neck is thin; it's closer to my '61 Les Paul. I think I also used a Gibson J-50 and a Silvertone Model 319 from the Sixties.

What about amps?

I used what I normally tour with. There's the Bletchley amp. I always carry a Bletchley to the studio, and I also bring a Marshall Astoria. I've gotten into Fender amps. We had two Champs — one was mine and one was Greg's — so we used them in stereo. I also used a Fender Tweed and a '65 Fender Reverb. Another standard studio amplifier for me is a Sixties Vox AC30.

You mentioned an octave pedal. Did you go pedal crazy?

Not super heavily. One amazing thing we did was — I think it's on a few guitar solos — we'd take either an Echoplex or a Space Echo, and we'd run the guitar through each one. We would stereo them. You can hear how wide-swept it is, especially if you're wearing headphones. Pink Floyd did a lot of that stuff, and I always thought it sounded interesting. Other than that, I used a wah pedal and some reverb. That's about it.

Was there ever any thought to holding the record till you knew you could play live?

I think the world needs music more than ever. So for us, the idea was to release this album now, and then we'll write another one. I think that was what's on the horizon.

Do you guys get together to rehearse even though there's no shows?

We all live within a stone's throw from each other, and we have a rehearsal space nearby. We're in there writing and demoing. We do a lot of that, playing together and conceptualizing ideas. I think that's what's in store for us for the rest of the year — unless anything changes. **GW**

ALYSSA GAFKJEN

NWOCR: RIFFS FOR DAYS!

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REVIVAL BLACK

WATCHING SLASH'S PERFORMANCE in Guns N' Roses' "Appetite for Destruction" music video may have first inspired a young Alan Rimmer to take up lead guitar, but it was late, great AC/DC rhythm ace Malcolm Young that led him to choose his current go-to ax: a Gretsch G5230T Electromatic Jet. Rimmer channels both of his heroes in Revival Black — the raucous English five-piece in which he shares six-string duties with Adam Kerbache. The crew are currently sequestered at Liverpool's esteemed Motor Museum Studio (Oasis' *Definitely Maybe*, the 1975) tracking the follow-up to their 2019 debut *Step in Line*, which Rimmer says is shaping up to be a "hard-hitting," "grown-up" update to their already high-impact sound.

"We are a live band through and through," Rimmer says, "so playing live is what we do best. We track all our songs live in the studio, which gives them life and the raw energy that we are after and I think that comes across in our studio albums."

LISTEN NOW: "Wide Awake," "So Alive"

STATION

FOUNDED BY GUITARIST Chris Lane and vocalist Patrick Kearney, Station are a New York City outfit that channel the winning formula of melodic riffs, earworm vocal hooks and soaring solos of Eighties hitmakers: from Kiss and Van Halen to Whitesnake and Winger. Fittingly, guitarist Chris Lane's ax of choice is a Jackson SL1 shred machine, which allows him to "go from driving rock to power ballad pretty quick." Since forming in 2011, Station have released two full-lengths — 2018's *More Than the Moon* and 2019's *Stained Glass* — and landed spots at big-draw events like Rocklahoma and warming up crowds for Y&T, Pat Benatar, Lynch Mob and more. The band is on track to release their third "spectrum-expanding" record this summer.

"We are very influenced by a lot of bands from the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties, and I think that comes out in our taste in both production and songwriting," Lane says. "We are always looking to try something new and expand upon the 'classic sounds,' but our roots come from a big power chord and a stack of amplifiers behind us."

LISTEN NOW: "All You Need Is a Heartbeat," "I Won't Break Your Heart"

THE STANDSTILLS

GUITARIST JONNY FOX caught the classic-rock bug early when he discovered his brother's Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin collections.

The "power and groove" of those bands sent him down a musical path that he still explores to this day with drummer/singer Renee Couture in the Standstills. The Canadian duo's fiery riffs and thundering drums may also evoke modern-day heavies like the White Stripes and Queens of the Stone Age, but Fox isn't shy about the Standstills' deep desire to pay tribute to the "really fucking good and timeless" classics of his youth — which is apparent in the "guitar driven, outlaw rock 'n' roll" of their latest effort, 2019's *Badlands*. The Standstills are currently recording their fourth album, which Fox describes as "next level on all fronts."

"We spend a lot of time jamming on grooves with explosive hooks," Fox says. "That is most of the foundation in which we built our sound off. What also sets us apart from the pack is that Renee and I are a duo — our creative energy is uniquely shared, and we feel that tells a different story onstage and in the studio."

LISTEN NOW: "Orleans," "Wild"

BLACK PISTOL FIRE

GUITARIST/VOCALIST KEVIN McKeown and drummer Eric Owen seem to have a preternatural musical connection — which makes sense when you learn the two have been friends since kindergarten. Since forming Black Pistol Fire in 2011, the Austin-via-Toronto duo has refined its sound through rigorous touring and multiple full-lengths — resulting in a particularly fervent blend of dynamic rock 'n' roll, epitomized on infectious cuts like the Black Sabbath-meets-White Stripes burner "Suffocation Blues" and the garage-y surf guitar of Queens of the Stone Age-esque "Lost Cause." In January Black Pistol Fire dropped their new and sixth record, *Look Alive*, the debut single for which, "Hope in Hell," has already surpassed a million streams on Spotify.

"Every time we hit the stage to play, no matter if it's a sold-out show or not, we remember why we started doing this," McKeown says. "And our live show is where we cut our teeth and where we honed our craft. It's a rollercoaster ride, and the stage is where we come alive."

LISTEN NOW: "Suffocation Blues," "Hipster Shakes" **GW**



the whole song that day. I'm pretty proud of that one. When everybody writes, it's hard to get a word in. Everybody wants to play their own songs.

A bassist who plays the Mellotron.

That's very John Paul Jones.

It is. You know, a few years ago, it was "Led Zeppelin this, Led Zeppelin that." That's all people were talking about. For a long time, I felt like I couldn't admit that John Paul Jones is perhaps the best rock 'n' roll bass player of all time. And I'm not going to lie — he's what got me into playing bass. He's the template. His tone and intelligence, the way he sat behind the bass drum. Everything he did was perfect. But I think we're at the point now where we just don't give a fuck what people say. Just always believe in what you're doing, and unforgivingly be yourself.

Are you still using your Fender Precision Bass?

That's my main bass, the Sea Foam Green Precision Bass with the Jazz Bass neck. I learned how to play on my dad's Fernandes P-Bass. One day, he decided I needed my own instrument, so I got a Mexican-made Jazz Bass, and that's what I played for years. It came to a point, though, where we were going on our first real tour. One of our early producers, Marlon Young, gifted me a Precision Bass because my Jazz Bass was starting to fall apart. The way I play is so aggressive — I really dig into the strings — so it had to be a P-Bass. But I hated the neck because it was too wide, so I replaced it with the Jazz neck. That's what I've been using ever since. I have a wonderful personal connection to it. As far as amps, it's a Sunn 2000S with a 215 cabinet. John McBride, the owner of Blackbird Studios, gifted me that amplifier. It's very crunchy; you barely turn it on and it's the loudest fucking amp. But there was also a 300-watt Fender Bassman that I used for fuzz. It's more of a punky kind of deal.

What kind of advice would you give to young bands hoping to be the next Greta Van Fleet?

Never stop playing. I hope I can communicate this in a non-cliché way, but the reason we're able to play and write the way we do is because we've done it so much. I think that's why you don't see so many people coming out of the woodwork with great performances and great songs — they don't put in the time. So that's it: Never stop playing and always believe in yourself. It's very important to do exactly what you want without listening to criticism from other people. Because nobody knows you're doing it wrong if you don't know what you're doing. — Joe Bosso



CROSSROADS

SHREDDING AT
THE CROSSROADS

One of the original Jackson guitars Steve Vai played — and dropped — in *Crossroads*, the 1986 film starring Ralph Macchio, Joe Seneca, Jamie Gertz and Vai. It's signed, "Steve Vai at the Crossroads 85"

Chasing A Devil's Tale

A quest to solve the mysteries behind STEVE VAI's enigmatic Crossroads Jackson guitar — the most famous guitar that was never heard

STORY BY Eric Kirkland PHOTOS BY Michael Mesker AND Hughes Fioretti Photography

THE 1986 BLUES-fantasy film *Crossroads* artfully intertwined the Robert Johnson legend with the story of a gifted young guitarist in search of a lost song. But by the time the film reached its crescendo blues-metal guitar duel, the unintended stars of the film were really the timeless musical performances and instruments themselves. In particular, the sparkling, blood-red Jackson wielded by Steve Vai as the Devil's guitarist, Jack Butler, ignited fans' imaginations with the millennia-old suggestion that an object may be imbued with dark, supernatural powers.

The guitar's origin was unknown. Vai has little recollection of the instrument, and it has only been seen on the internet a few times since filming concluded, sparking 35 years of fervent speculation and debate. Adding to its mysterious aura, and sometimes overlooked by fans, the guitar has never — and will likely never — be heard. According to Vai, all of his parts in *Crossroads* were recorded on his Green Meanie, and no recordings of the Jackson exist. Regardless, its presence in the minds of players has remained so strong that Jackson Guitars recently released the Limited-Edition San Dimas SD22 JB, a long-time-coming replica that celebrates the original guitar.

For me, what began as a casual side project to discover a little more about this curious guitar turned into a personal journey, an obsession, really, that crisscrossed the globe and spanned 20 years. It became my mission to find the real Jack Butler Jackson, unlock its secrets and ultimately build a period-correct replica with the same luthiers who created the original, iconic axe. With the gracious help of Vai, Arlen Roth, Ralph Macchio, Walter Hill, Ry Cooder, Billy "Two Stacks" Tucker, the Hard Rock Cafe and so many artists, luthiers, artisans, collectors, historians and photographers, we finally have the guitar's history, the answers to fans' questions and the first-ever high-res photographs of the sinister Jack Butler Jackson.

FINDING THE ORIGINAL JACK BUTLER JACKSON

WHEN I BEGAN writing for *Guitar World* in 2001, the job expectedly required a great deal of research, fact checking, etc. And the internet was really only a few years old. As I searched for details about various gear and artists, I frequently saw fans passionately arguing over the Jack Butler guitar. I couldn't believe how many divergent opinions were shared about who built it, what happened to it, the likely specs, which pickups were in it, etc.

Suffice to say, the online fervor rekindled my own passion for the instrument and began a mild-mannered pursuit that quickly morphed into a monstrous 20-year quest.

It seemed logical to start my search with the one person most likely to know the guitar's history and progression of ownership: that's right, Steve Vai, aka Jack Butler, himself. Of course, It wasn't as simple as just picking up the phone, and I was keenly aware that leveraging my probationary position with the magazine — under the guise of writing an article that was not yet approved or even pitched — placed me on shaky ground. This wasn't quite as dishonest as it sounds, because any good journalist is going to research stories that might not be accepted/published. That was my prepared response,

but I knew that if anyone actually bothered to call my bosses, it would be readily apparent that my venture was as much personal as it was professional. Undeterred, I eventually found my way to Vai's manager and carefully crafted a letter that I hoped would spark his interest. Approximately a month passed and I sheepishly followed up by email several times.

Then, one day, I opened my inbox to see that Vai had replied to my query. He couldn't have been more kind, basically saying he had no recollection of what he did with the guitar after shooting and couldn't begin to speculate on its whereabouts. In later communications, he said Grover Jackson gave him the guitar prior to being cast in the film and that he brought it to the set thinking that its red sparkle color and style would suit the theme and character. As we exchanged a few more emails, he said he'd be happy to do a short interview about the movie and even offered to personally go through his vault in search of the guitar; Vai's own curiosity was admittedly piqued.

When I asked Vai about the Jackson's pickups, he didn't know what they were, but he proffered that he likely used DiMarzio PAFs or PAF Pros to record his parts — the question about



which pickups were in the Jack Butler Jackson and which were used to record his parts are among the most highly discussed by fans online. It's important to clarify here that the Green Meanie guitar he used to record his parts in *Crossroads* was recently confirmed to have a basswood body with DiMarzio PAF Pro pickups. However, the PAF Pros may not have been in the guitar when Vai recorded the *Crossroads* pieces, which likely happened between the end of Alcatraz's 1985 tour and the beginning of rehearsals with the David Lee Roth band in 1986. Fans are also aware that Vai experimented with the DiMarzio X2N during his Alcatraz days, making it another possibility for the recording. The final consensus among Vai, DiMarzio's Steve Blucher and myself is that PAF Pros were the most likely pickups on the recording.

But which pickups were in the Jack Butler Jackson? The answer: Jackson pickups! There was a ceramic, high-output J-90C in the bridge and an Alnico J-80 in the neck position. The dark magnets and bobbin sheen gave them a menacing look, unlike anything else on the market, and since Jackson built the guitar, it makes perfect sense that they'd use their own pickups. Ultimately, Vai suggested I next speak to Arlen Roth and Grover Jackson.

A great deal has already been published about Roth's extensive, albeit unofficially credited, contributions to the film's slide guitar playing and his training of Ralph Macchio. But Roth was nice enough to speak with me for a couple of hours about these fabulous sto-

ries, including a fond anecdote about a day off from filming where the cast formed a softball team called the Crossroads Crushers. Back to my primary question: He didn't know what happened to the original red Jackson. What he did say was that there were many copies made for Vai to drop, some with the paint still wet and some that crew members took home (in broken bits and pieces).

On the suggestion of Roth, I contacted a well-known Jackson collector in Southern California who proved to have a great deal of knowledge about all things Jackson Guitars. He was certain that either Grover Jackson or Mike Shannon built the guitar; Shannon was one of Grover Jackson's original employees in the heyday of Charvel superstrats and is most noted for building Randy Rhoads' offset Concorde V. He said Mike was still building guitars, then for the Fender Custom Shop, and that I should also consider contacting a Jackson aficionado in Sweden, who was known to have one of the most extensive collections of rare and obscure Charvels and Jacksons. I emailed the collector, but after several months of waiting, I didn't receive a reply.

Around this same time, I came across an online discussion board, where someone had posted a photo of the Jack Butler guitar at the Houston Hard Rock Cafe. I later learned it was previously displayed at the Las Vegas HRC. It was signed "Steve Vai at the Crossroads 85." Finally, by a stroke of sheer luck, I'd found it — a true Eureka moment! All I had to do was contact the Hard Rock Cafe's corporate headquarters and ask for the details.

Right? Wrong. I should've known it wasn't going to be this simple... they confirmed that it was in their collection at one time but that they no longer had it and that no further information was available. Just like that, it was lost again — a dead end.

By now, it was 2003 — time to call Jackson Guitars directly. Thinking I might never find the original, I also decided to build an exact replica for myself and use it in the article that I hoped *Guitar World* would someday print. After quite a few phone calls and emails, I made my way to one of Jackson's production heads. He said, "If we can just get the serial number or work-order number (from inside the tremolo cavity), we can easily track it down in the Jackson records." He was also onboard with building a replica and pleased to put me in touch with Mike Shannon. Mike got on the phone and discussed at length all of the likely details, using his memory of how they did things at Jackson in 1985. Mike also suggested I contact Grover Jackson directly, who was — at the time — running a CNC shop in Fullerton, California; Grover is now the luthier and mastermind behind Dave Friedman's heralded high-end guitar line.

Grover didn't have a strong recollection of the guitar but told me the body was definitely swamp ash and that there were multiple other guitars made to resemble the original; this jived perfectly with what Arlen told me. At about this time, I also learned that only one of the copies was spot-on to the original, which made me believe I may be chasing two guitars, without any way to know which one

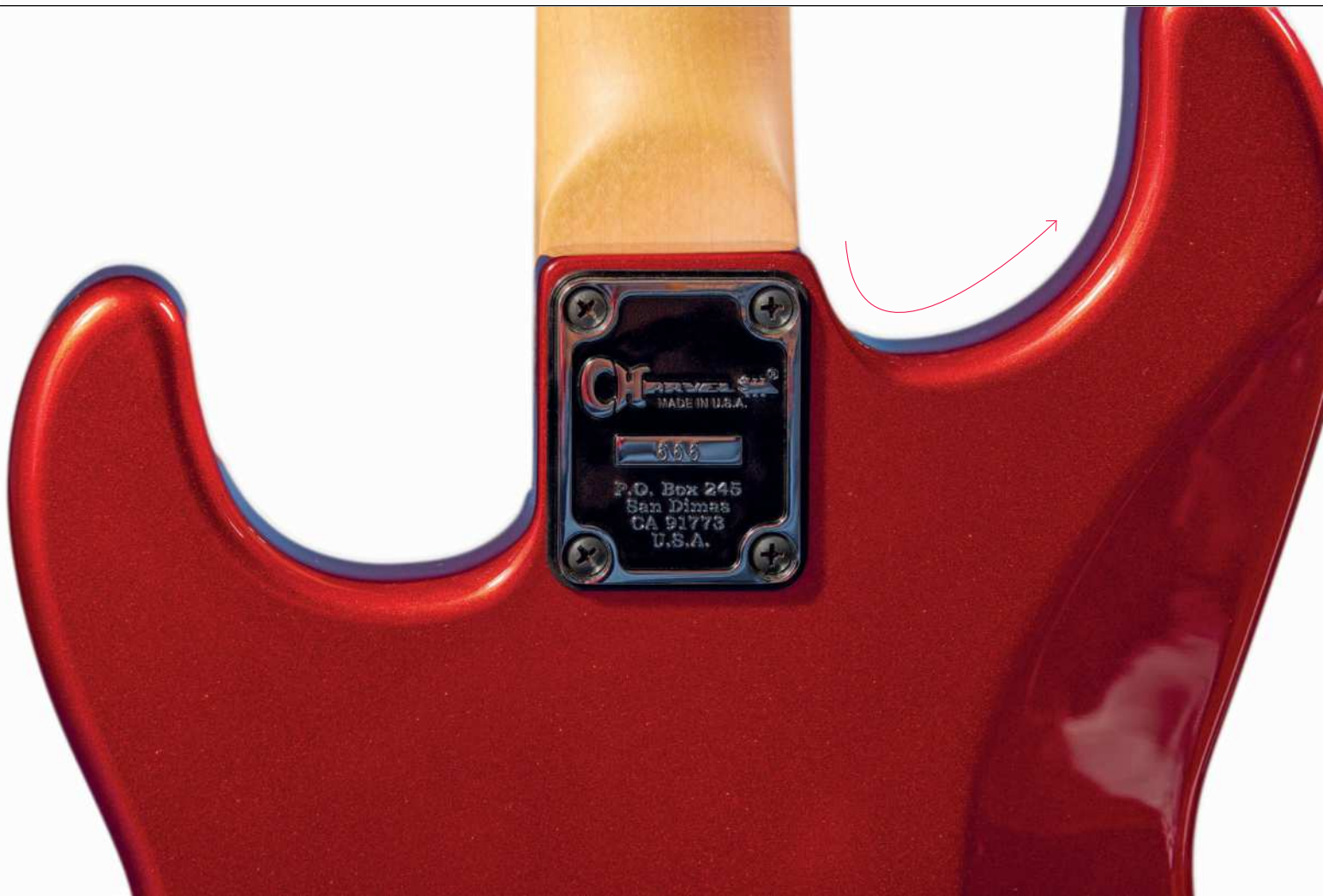


CROSSROADS

A GHOST IN
THE SYSTEM?

The *Crossroads* guitar, which is now housed at the Hard Rock Cafe & Casino Biloxi (Mississippi), has a Charvel neck plate with the serial number 4708 — an authentic serial number, but for an entirely different Charvel from 1985. Glue residue on the headstock shows where gaffer's tape covered the Jackson logo during filming





Crossroads

ONE HELL
OF A REPLICA

Eric Kirkland's one-of-a-kind replica of the *Crossroads* Jackson has a "666" Charvel San Dimas neck plate — and a personalized Jack Butler flight case by Rock Hard Cases



was the original.

Then I received an unexpected email. It was from the Swedish collector, who confirmed that he never owned the guitar but recently saw it at the Hard Rock Cafe in Queenstown, New Zealand. It was another “aha!” moment, and it certainly warranted a pricey phone call.

“G’day, mate. Rock and love. Welcome to our pub!” was the Aussie-fueled greeting I received. After identifying myself and the guitar I sought, the manager said, “Sure, I’m looking at it right here. She’s a beauty, mate. What can I do for you?” I explained that I’d been tracking the guitar’s history for some time and planned to rebuild the guitar for a story in *Guitar World*... so I just needed a few pics and the serial number off the neck plate. “Can’t help you, mate. They’d have me arse if I took it off the wall.” I said, “Look, it took me years to get this far; there must be something we can do to make this happen. Name your price.” He said, “Well, we’re huge fans of your mag here, so send us a box of *Guitar World* T-shirts and toppers (baseball caps), and you’ll have your photos.” That’s it? I thought. Some merch and swag are all they want? I confidently replied, “No problem, they’re in the mail.” Of course, there was a problem: I had no authority whatsoever to send a box of *Guitar World* swag to anyone, and especially not gratis. So I called my editor with an unrelated list of things to discuss, and at the end slipped in that the Hard Rock was helping me with a story and

they’d like us to send this box of stuff... to New Zealand. My matter-of-fact approach apparently worked because in a few weeks I received a new email from Queenstown that said “photos attached.” Here it was at last: three photos, front, side and rear, with the final key to the treasure vault, the serial number: 4708.

I triumphantly took my new-found information back to the Jackson Custom Shop and thought that they’d finally be able to track the guitar in their records — we’d have its specs and history. Wrong again! The custom shop said there was no record of the guitar, and it must have been made off the books. The serial number on the guitar’s plate was authentic, but for an entirely different Charvel from 1985. It was the right year but the wrong guitar. Apparently, it was common practice for neckplates to be reused, perhaps when a guitar was destroyed or disassembled, and then used on another guitar. So the original Jack Butler guitar is officially and appropriately a ghost in the system. It never happened.

Some of the mystery did unravel when I took the serial number and confirmation of location back to the Hard Rock’s corporate office. They explained that it didn’t show up before because they were changing to a new record-keeping system and the guitar was being stored/maintained before being reallocated to the New Zealand location. The Hard Rock’s records also showed that they

acquired it from none other than Norm’s Rare Guitars. This was no surprise, as rock stars frequently sell and trade guitars to Norm, who on occasion resells them to the Hard Rock. Steve didn’t recall selling it to Norm, so it’s possible he just didn’t remember or gave the guitar to someone who later sold it to Norm. Ultimately, I wanted to directly inspect the instrument and shoot it for the magazine, but its location halfway around the world made this financially and logistically impossible. And I still didn’t know if they only had the copy or the real guitar.

Fast-forward approximately 10 years, and I’d all but given up hope that we might ever have a chance to properly document and catalog the instrument. Then it showed up again on the internet, this time at the Hard Rock Cafe & Casino Biloxi (Mississippi) — an appropriate home, given that the crossroads of legend were in that Deep South state. I contacted the Hard Rock, confirmed that it did indeed reside at the Biloxi location, then traveled there myself to see it. Yes, it was only used as a movie prop, and I was well-past the age of adolescent fascination. Still, it was a victory to finally have it in front of me after so many years of discovery and disappointment. Now all I had to do was convince the Hard Rock to let me remove it from the plexiglass display capsule and shoot it for the magazine. But this time I couldn’t ask them to do it on faith. I needed an official thumbs-up from the magazine. It took another four years before this would come to fruition, and

wouldn't you know that just as the magazine and the HRC were both on board, the nation was shut down by a once-in-a-century pandemic.

No surprise at all, the pandemic wasn't the only barrier to crossing the finish line. The HRC simultaneously informed me that I was not the only person requesting to shoot the guitar. I couldn't believe I might not only be stalled again, but potentially lose my story to another journalist! My jaw clenched to suppress an indignant tone, I asked, "And may I inquire as to who this other person is?" "Sure," they said, "It's Steve Vai." Well, that's just great, I thought, Jack Butler himself was looking to reclaim his fire-born headcutter... how could I possibly compete with that?

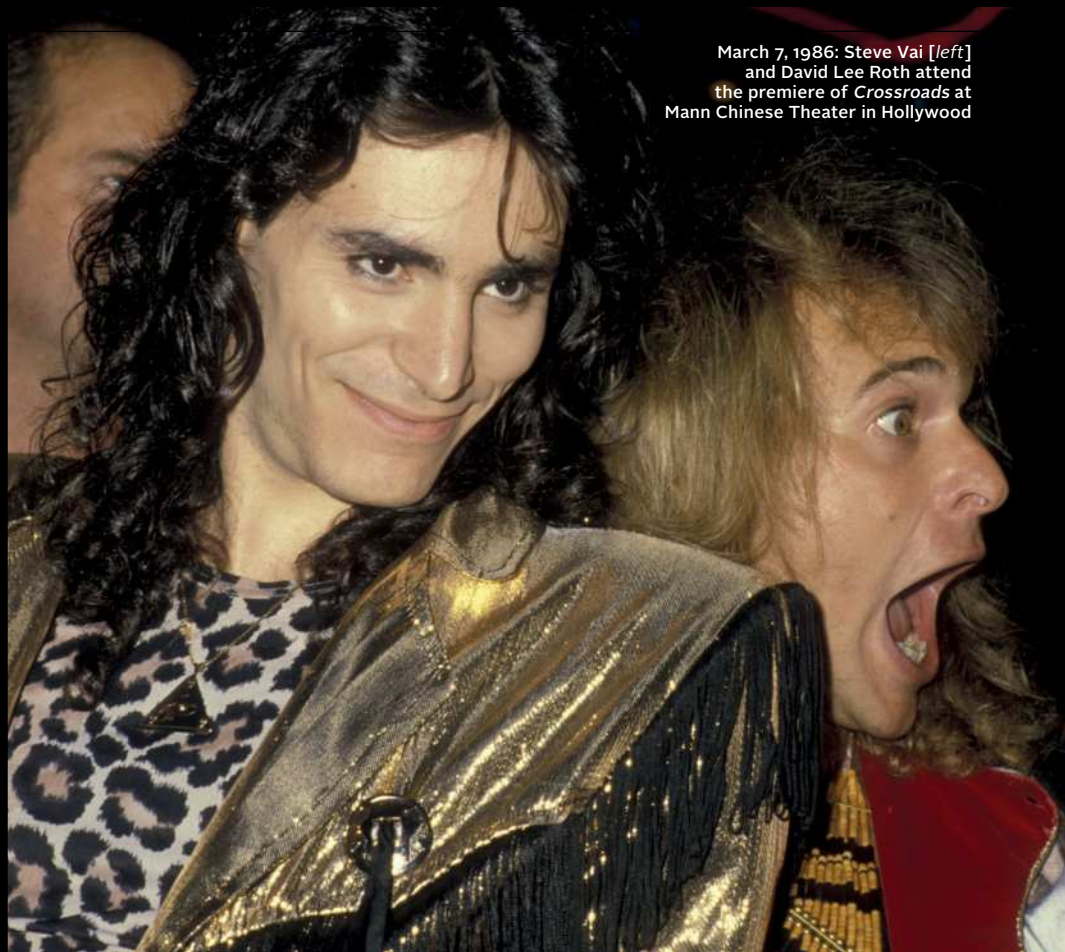
Okay, dramatic prose aside, it turned out that Vai was continuing to catalog his guitars through the years, as seen on his website, and wanted to have a closer look at this famed piece of his past. But what I assumed was a fresh disaster turned out to be sweet serendipity, because I soon learned that Michael Mesker, Vai's art director, and I were unknowingly working together on separate parts of another project. We struck a deal to have the guitar flown to L.A., where Mike could shoot it, and now finally have the first-ever high-resolution images of the only known surviving Jack Butler Jackson guitar.

For all you gearheads out there, here are the specs: Swamp Ash body, quarter-sawn maple neck with a gunstock oil finish, 16-inch radius maple fretboard, woodscrew-top-mounted Floyd Rose tremolo, candy red sparkle finish (not red metal flake), 7.67 pounds, 1 11/16-inch nut, Jackson J-90c bridge humbucker, Jackson J-80 neck humbucker, 22 jumbo frets, LP-style deep-well three-way switch with a fine-knurled nickel nut, Gotoh SG-36 tuners, black brass Charvel switch tip, oval-style Charvel input jack plate and a slim "C" neck profile measuring .792 inches at the nut tapering up to .845 inches at the 12th fret.

DROPPING COPIES

AN UNKNOWN NUMBER of copies were made of the original guitar, so that Vai could convincingly drop his guitar in defeat without actually harming the real Jackson. Most of them were made by Jackson, and of these Grover said, "They didn't even have a basecoat — they were just mockups." None of these are known to have survived intact. But one copy was created that needed to essentially be identical. This is where Pat Wilkins and Steve Ripley entered the story. Sadly, Ripley passed in 2019, but beforehand spoke to me about the project and shared anecdotally that it was one of his multi-output

March 7, 1986: Steve Vai [left] and David Lee Roth attend the premiere of *Crossroads* at Mann Chinese Theater in Hollywood



The Devil's Butler

STEVE VAI discusses his role in *Crossroads* in this previously unpublished 2004 GW interview

STEVE VAI HAS rarely spoken in-depth about his role as Jack Butler in *Crossroads*, likely because most of the questions he's been asked were focused on his gear, how he achieved the sounds, which parts he actually played and who wrote the music. And anyone who has ever met Vai will tell you that the only terrifying thing about him is his ferocious guitar playing. But it turns out that portraying the possessed-of-evil character on film, especially as a first-time actor, required the famously warm-hearted and wise virtuoso to call forth some rather unpleasant feelings... the demons we all have within us. In this previously unpublished *Guitar World* interview from 2004, Vai opened up about his experience making the film and how he delved into his dark recesses to embody a character so unlike him, but one that ultimately became Generation X's unofficial guitar antihero.

Musicians, including yourself, often talk candidly about the spiritual connection they have with their instruments. Did you find the movie and its supernatural theme a unique opportunity for you to showcase

that connection through the music and performance?

There was a time in my life when I was very willing and able to project a very dark aura. I discovered that it was having a detrimental effect on my mental and physical health and I actually spiraled into a black hole. Fortunately for me I was able to claw my way out after several years. During the filming of *Crossroads*, I allowed that aura to permeate me once again. It was difficult because it's easy to be sucked back into that way of thinking and behaving again. The music was more or less secondary to the attitude. I don't usually go to that particular place very much anymore. You become what you create, and in those early days I was creating a lot of dark stuff.

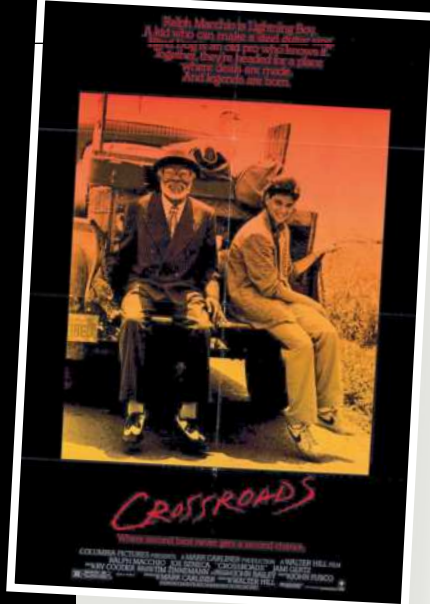
Why do you think the Jack Butler character had such an impact on young players?

I think people responded to Jack Butler because I was projecting so much intensity into the character. Kids respond to that kind of thing. Take a look at most video games, blockbuster movies, contemporary rock record releases, rock videos, etc. The majority

RON GALELLA, LTD./RON GALELLA COLLECTION VIA GETTY IMAGES

CROSSROADS

The replica wears an Earth III strap (as used by Vai in the film) — and was finished with the very same silver sequin paint flake used on the original guitar in 1985



“I TOLD HIM NO AT FIRST, BUT THEN I READ THE SCRIPT AGAIN and felt that a certain side of my personality could relate to the character of Jack Butler” — STEVE VAI

of them are centered around sex and violence. Those elements light up the senses. It's a frightening proposal to look into the future and imagine the type of stimulating, psyche-manipulating sensory output we will be eating. But I also think there are many socially redeeming and uplifting things out there too. But back to Earth. I believe the music in *Crossroads* and the whole idea of the duel was energetic and well laid out, and kids respond to that too.

“Butler’s Bag” and the duel that followed are some of the most memorable and widely learned amalgams of blues and metal ever recorded. Does the music, guitar or film have a special meaning for you as well?

It was an honor to have worked with Ry Cooder. He is truly brilliant and talented in a very earthy way. Being a part of a movie was a hoot. I had a lot of fun with Arlen Roth. The movie is like a snapshot for me of a particular time in my life. I was growing at a fast rate and was luckily surrounded by great people. I'm not a part of the fast lane Hollywood scene, and I don't particularly desire to act but I sure did have a good time doing that film. In a nutshell, I got a call from Ry Cooder and he asked me if I'd like to play on the soundtrack because they needed a hot rod guitar player for this guitar-duel scene. I read the script, built a duel concept and we recorded it. After the director [Walter Hill] had met me and heard the recording, he asked me if I'd be interested in being in the film. I told him no at first, but then I read the script again and felt that a certain side of my personality could relate to the character of Jack Butler. Celluloid history. — *Eric Kirkland*



pickups that made it possible to capture the last symphonic chord of “Eugene’s Trick Bag,” the Paganini-inspired piece that ultimately sent Jack Butler to the guillotine. This is another revelation, since fans have long questioned whether those last tones were added in post-production, accomplished with an octave pedal or created by pushing the strings against the Tele’s neck pickup.

For anyone who doesn’t know Pat Wilkins, he’s painted and/or built guitars for a who’s-who of A-list players from the Seventies to the present day. Here’s Pat’s recollection of the project with his best friend: “Steve Ripley was very well known as a musician and a producer. He did a tour or two with Bob Dylan and from there met a lot of top-end musicians. Vai may have met him through that connection. Or it was because Steve built many of the stereo guitars for players like

Ry Cooder, EVH and producers like Phil Ramone. This I know for sure: During the filming and blocking out of the movie, the duel at the end required the Devil’s guitarist (Steve Vai) to drop his guitar and walk out in anger and frustration. Steve Ripley told me that Vai said there was no way he was going to drop his guitar, and that’s when it was decided to get a mockup made. My guess is that since Ripley had made over a dozen guitars for Ry, he probably suggested to Vai that he ask Ripley to make it for him. I was doing all the Ripley finishes, so he came to me with the request to copy the original. I know we had the original in-hand when we matched up the colors, and Ripley was very hands-on about getting it right enough to fool the cameras — I guess he knew about that too. He was really a brilliant man. We did a 24-hour shift to get this right, because they were filming in

three days and that's all the time we had to finish this up. I had an old refrigerator that I put a 100-watt bulb in. I put a big dowel rod inside and hung the body in there to force-dry everything. It was tricky to get it right. That's what I remember about the guitar and its history. Oh, and even though the original guitar was an early Charvel, Steve used a Kramer body that he had lying around for the mockup. Steve was doing Kramer/Ripley guitars at the time and had a huge stack of Kramer bodies that were just going to waste. He found one that looked like the Charvel model and we finished that."

This leaves one last question to answer: Is the Hard Rock's guitar the original Jackson or the Wilkins/Ripley copy? The answer is that this is indeed the real guitar and that Walter Hill must have run out of copies to drop. In some of the final scenes of Vai playing, cracks in the body and finish are evident. Arlen Roth said, "Hill would never have used these shots unless it was the last guitar to shoot." Furthermore, it's highly unlikely that Ripley/Wilkins had a real Jackson neck, and he always shot his candy paint on a silver base coat, not the white base coat apparent on the Hard Rock's guitar.

RECREATING THE DEVIL'S GUITAR

EARLY INTO MY research, I naively thought it would be fun and reasonably simple to build an exact replica of the Jack Butler Jackson. After all, I'm an accomplished guitar tech, and I had the help of professionals who were far more skilled than me, including Mike Shannon at Jackson's Custom Shop, Pat Wilkins, Nick Scout at Scout Guitars and Mitch at KNE Guitars. How hard could it be to assemble a simple two-humbucker Charvel-style body with a Jackson neck and a Floyd Rose trem? But, pun intended, the devil's definitely in the details.

Looking back, I don't know what was more difficult: rebuilding the guitar or finding the original. A huge part of the challenge was sourcing exact-year parts. It took me many years to find them, but every single piece of hardware on this replica is from 1985, with the exception of the neck plate. When I was working with the Jackson Custom Shop, the manager suggested we do something special. So they created a real San Dimas neck plate (this is before the San Dimas plates were reissued) and had the custom serial number "666" laser etched into it. Not only is it wicked-appropriate to the theme, I was told it's the only custom serial number ever officially issued by Charvel/Jackson.

Mike Shannon at the Jackson Custom Shop built me my first attempt at this guitar — unfortunately before I had all of the correct information, parts and formula for the finish. He even rebuilt it for me a second time because the first one's specs got mixed up with a guitar being built alongside mine — for none other than Eddie Van Halen. The gui-

tar he created was astounding in every way, but it ultimately had to be redone a third time because of my own incorrect information.

By the time I got around to building this final version, Shannon was semi-retired. I reused the Shannon neck but turned to KNE Guitars for the body, possibly the only shop outside of Charvel/Jackson that currently cuts precisely correct San Dimas bodies. He selected a very special piece of Swamp Ash, only 3.6 pounds, that we edged with a slightly sharper than 3/8-inch roundover. I went back to Pat Wilkins for the finish, since he painted the only copy to get close-up screen time and said that he still remembered the original formula. It's important to note that every replica I've seen has been shot with a heavy flake. In actuality, the original was a candy red sparkle, meaning there were silver micro sequin flakes mixed into the paint. This is why the original guitar doesn't appear to have any flake or sparkle until it's turned in the light — a detail that is only seen a couple times on the film's dark stage. The final color of my recreation appears slightly deeper and darker, because the original guitar's paint has faded considerably over 35 years.

Then there was one more surprise in store for me, and this time a pleasant one. When I approached Pat Wilkins about painting my replica, he said, "You're in luck. I just happen to have a little jar of the original silver sequin flake that I used on the first *Crossroads* guitar in 1985. I have just enough to do one body and I can't get any more of it. This very spe-

Both cases made for the replica feature an embroidered "Malum in Se," Latin for "evil [or wrong] in itself" and the Leviathan Cross, a symbol of the devil and the alchemical symbol of sulphur

CREDITS

vai.com, arlenroth.com, hardrock.com, wilkinsguitars.com, kneguitars.com, rockhardcases.com, ggqualitycase.com, jacksonguitars.com, groverjackson.com, earththree.com, michaelmesker.com, hughesfioretti.com, scoutguitars.com

cial flake came from a shop that used to be in Canoga Park, right off Sherman Way. They were cutting and making the pearls in a three-bedroom home that had been completely gutted — there was pearl all over the floor and lawn. It was a complete mess, but they made it all custom while you waited. I think the neighbors finally called the EPA or the cops because I drove back one day to pick up a bunch more pearl and flake and there was no one there. Bummer!"

Two custom cases were commissioned for my replica: a flight case from Rock Hard Cases and an Italian leather-covered case from G&G. Of course, it wouldn't be complete without a new blood-splatter strap from the Earth III Guitar Strap Co. (the same that Vai used in the film). It's a phenomenal one-of-a-kind instrument, even without the story, and, for me, the unabashed realization of a childhood dream.

THAT'S A WRAP

TO PUT THIS in perspective, the Jack Butler Jackson was never used as anything more than a movie prop. It truly is the most famous guitar that was never heard. But it meant so much more to starry-eyed, teenage moviegoers. It inspired many careers in music and ultimately became symbolic of a generation that pushed the limits of technical and musical expression. To the next generation, I say, "Who's next up there? Hmm? Who's coming on up? Who's gonna get their head cut?!" **GW**



SOUND CHECK

Hughes & Kettner's Spirit Nano Metal amp

*the gear
in review*



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EPIPHONE
INSPIRED BY GIBSON
J-45 and J-200

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NEW EQ

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FENDER
Chrissie Hynde
Telecaster



Spiritual Awakening

HUGHES & KETNER SPIRIT NANO SERIES AMPS

By Chris Gill

▶ WHEN IT COMES to advancements in guitar technology, the majority of the industry's most exciting developments over the last few decades have taken place in the amplifier market. One of the more fascinating trends is how small amplifiers have decreased in size while also expanding their tonal versatility and performance. Unlike most early mini amps, which provided adequate volume output and decent but limited and sometimes generic tones, today's diminutive micro amps can deliver sounds and volume levels comparable to the big boys.

The Hughes & Kettner Spirit Nano Series amps are a great example of just how far micro amp technology has come in recent times. Hughes & Kettner offers three different flavors of Spirit Nano amps — Vintage, Rock and Metal — each sharing similar designs and features but delivering entirely different sonic personalities. The Spirit

Nano Series amps are small and light enough to stash in a guitar case accessory pocket or airliner carry-on bag, but they are truly gig-worthy amps that can also be used for practice (with headphones) and direct recording.

FEATURES The secret behind the micro dimensions of Hughes & Kettner Spirit Nano Series is the company's Spirit Tone Generator, described as "a novel bionic design (that) replicate(s) the analog processes of a tube circuit." This technology is not solid-state or digital, but genuinely analog. Somehow the engineers at Hughes & Kettner figured out how to rebuild analog technology and make it better, smaller, cheaper. Each model delivers 25-watts of output at 8 ohms, or up to 50 watts with a 4-ohm speaker cabinet.

All three Hughes & Kettner Spirit Nano Series amps share identical controls, jacks and features, but each

Spirit Nano Rock
[above] and
Vintage models

CHEAT SHEET



LIST PRICE: \$299

(each model)

MANUFACTURER:

Hughes & Kettner,
hughes-and-kettner.com

- Each model — Vintage, Rock and Metal — features a distinct sonic personality and delivers a versatile variety of tones for their respective styles.
- The Sagging control duplicates the dynamic characteristics of a tube amp's power section, sounding lively at lower settings and aggressive and compressed at higher settings.
- The headphone jack allows users to practice in privacy, and the line out provides an unfiltered guitar signal ideal for direct recording with plug-ins.
- The solitary Tone control provides a dramatic range of tones that are perfectly dialed in for each model's respective style.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:** Providing tonal versatility and volume output rivaling full-size amps, Hughes & Kettner Spirit Nano Series amps may be incredibly small in size but they fully deliver for live performance, recording and practice applications.



model is voiced entirely differently from the others. The name on the faceplate and the color of the knobs are different on each model — white for Vintage, black for Rock and red for Metal — but even a blindfolded guitarist can tell which is which just by plugging in. In signature Hughes & Kettner style, the faceplate is illuminated with blue backlights. The Spirit Tone Generator also illuminates with a tube-like warm orange glow.

Front panel features consist of 1/4-inch headphone and instrument input jacks and Master, Sagging, Tone and Gain controls. A 1/4-inch line output, 1/8-inch auxiliary input, AES power save feature switch and 1/4-inch speaker output are mounted on the back panel. The amp head is powered by a 24VDC power supply.

PERFORMANCE Before I get into the sounds of each model, let me address this mysterious “sagging” feature. No, it isn’t a Mötley Crüe groupie aging emulator, but rather an ingenious innovation that duplicates the varying dynamics of power amp tubes. The sagging control’s lower range provides sparkling, lively tones, but the sound becomes fatter and more compressed as the control is turned up. The sagging control also is highly interactive with the master and gain controls — for example, setting the sagging control at 10 can work well at low master and gain settings to replicate the sound of a tube amp being pushed hard, but at higher

master and gain settings it can be a little too over the top.

The Vintage model provides the most clean headroom, but its gain is generous enough to produce distortion tones ideal for classic metal and grunge. The tone control provides an attractive sweep from the fat midrange of a classic low-watt combo to bolder dipped-midrange “American” amp character.

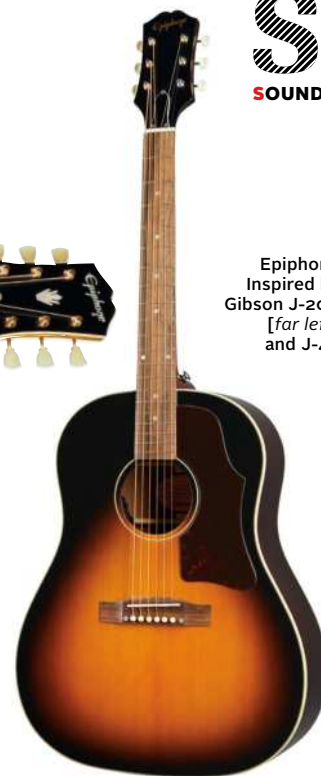
The Rock model comes on stronger, with a much more pronounced midrange voice and more aggressive distortion grind. This model excels at fat, singing lead tones with impressive sustain that emerges when gain is dialed around 5 and the sagging control is set between 6 to 9.

The Metal model truly lives up to its name, providing only the slightest hint of clean and overdrive tones at minimal master and gain settings before diving headlong into generously saturated distortion. The tone control on this model is impressively dialed in to deliver everything from classic Slayer sludge to razor sharp Cowboys-era Dimebag dirt. The bass is big but tight and the mids can bark or disappear completely.

All three are more than loud enough to gig with and sound great paired with speaker cabs ranging from 1x12 to 4x12. The line out is a direct recording/re-amping secret weapon, providing unfiltered audio for getting the best out of IR speaker and reverb simulation.



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson J-200 [far left] and J-45



The J's Have It

EPIPHONE INSPIRED BY GIBSON J-45 AND J-200

By Paul Riario

THERE'S A GOOD reason legions of diehard musicians proudly play Epiphone guitars — because they outperform more expensive brands and boast an undeniable quality-to-price ratio that's hard to beat. Following in Gibson's towering reputation for impeccable craftsmanship, Epiphone has recently taken a lockstep approach in vastly improving their Gibson-counterpart line of guitars by debuting "Epiphone Inspired by Gibson," an extensive collection of iconic acoustic and electric instruments designed from the original Gibson blueprints. I zeroed in on the remarkable J-45 and J-200 acoustics — a sloped shoulder and a super jumbo, respectively — from the "Epiphone Inspired By Gibson" Acoustic Collection, which also consists of the J-45 EC, Hummingbird and Hummingbird 12-string.

FEATURES Both guitars share all solid-wood construction, quarter-sawn spruce bracing, tapered dovetail neck joint, Indian Laurel (similar to rosewood) fingerboard with 20 medium jumbo frets, 1.69-inch (43mm) nut width and Fishman Sonicore under-saddle pickup and Sonitone preamp electronics with soundhole-mounted volume and tone controls.

Known as "The Workhorse," the J-45's classic sloped-shouldered dreadnought shape features solid mahogany for its back and sides, 4-ply ivory and black binding for the top and 1-ply ivory binding for the back, and a Sitka spruce top. The mahogany neck has a 24.72-inch-scale length with a comfortably rounded C-shape profile and a Sixties-style Kalamazoo headstock shape. Other appointments include a reverse-belly Indian Laurel bridge, J-45 shape Tortoise Shell pickguard, ivory button tuners and an aged vintage sunburst finish.

The J-200 lives up to its moniker as the "King of the Flat-Tops" with its super jumbo non-cutaway solid figured maple body, 6-ply binding for the top and 4-ply binding on the back, and a Sitka spruce top. The two-piece maple neck with a mahogany center strip has a 25.55-inch-scale length with a rounded C-shape profile that's noticeably slimmer than the J-45. Its standout visual appointments include a Moustache bridge with curved block inlays, crown headstock inlay and graduated crown mother-of-pearl fingerboard inlays, a J-200 style pickguard with two-color floral motif and an aged antique natural gloss color finish.

PERFORMANCE The "Inspired by Gibson"

handle for the J-45 and J-200 is apropos here, because to my eyes, Epiphone went to great lengths in authentically recreating the overall vibe and aesthetic of these iconic acoustics. Despite the striking resemblance to the original models, one of the best and most palpable attributes both acoustics share is the aged gloss finish. The high-gloss tackiness that plagues most budget guitars is now replaced by a soft and supple aged finish that wholeheartedly contributes to an inviting playing feel. With its Cadillac proportions and ornate appointments, the J-200 is undoubtedly the showstopper of the two, commanding authority with its booming, woody voice and wonderfully set-up low action. In contrast to the noble J-200, the J-45 has less snobby appeal with bourgeois looks, folksy playability and a stripped-down resonant tone. And it'll be no surprise that this J-45 might be the enduring favorite among strummers and fingerpickers with its effluence of low-mids that truly shape its punchy voice. Now, I wouldn't categorize either acoustic as warm-sounding, because there is a definitive high-end crispness on both that reveals their newness. Still, at their respective affordable price points, the J-45 and J-200 are fantastic players that will eventually sound warmer with age and time spent playing them. And isn't that the point?

CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE:

J-45, \$699;
J-200, \$899

MANUFACTURER:

Epiphone,
epiphone.com

● Both acoustics feature all solid wood construction that's faithful to their original Gibson counterparts, and aged gloss finishes that contribute to a broken-in, comfortable playing feel.

● The J-45 and J-200 feature Fishman Sonicore under-saddle pickup and Sonitone preamp electronics, making both models ready for the stage.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Epiphone Inspired by Gibson J-45 and J-200 closely capture the irresistible tones and appealing mojo of the originals at prices that won't break the bank.



Dean Guitars

MD24 FLOYD ROASTED MAPLE VINTAGE ELECTRICS

The Dean Guitars MD24 Floyd Roasted Maple Vintage models are tailor-made for players who seek vintage appeal with modern playability and tone. The MD24 F features a solid basswood body with a flat top and a contoured arm cut, bolt-on construction (25 1/2-inch scale), satin-finished C-shaped roasted maple neck and fingerboard for improved stability and bright tones, 24 jumbo frets, and available in two new color finishes: Vintage Blue and Vintage Orange. These guitars come equipped with a Floyd 1000 Series tremolo system and direct-mount Seymour Duncan TB5/APH-1 sandblasted Zebra pickups.

STREET PRICE: \$849
deanguitars.com

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to powerful and
everything in between,
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are a level up!**



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STREET PRICE: \$279
eventideaudio.com





Vox Amps

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The Vox MINI GO series comprises three lightweight, compact and portable guitar amps (Vox MINI GO 3, Vox MINI GO 10, Vox MINI GO 50) suited for use anywhere from home to the street, or even in a concert venue. Each amp in the series features realistic and responsive amp models based on the “VET” modeling technology used on the Vox Cambridge50 amp (including a newly developed vocoder for talking modulation effects), a rhythm machine that can play back patterns from 11 genres, onboard effects for a diverse range of sounds and tone, a mic input, AUX input and a headphone jack — all as standard features. The Vox MINI GO amps can be powered by the included AC adapter or by any USB mobile battery with a current output of 1.5A or greater.

STREET PRICES: Vox MINI GO 3, \$169.99; Vox MINI GO 10, \$229.99; Vox MINI GO 50, \$299.99
voxamps.com



Buzz Bin

Becos FX ComplIQ Mini Pro Compressor



THERE'S NOTHING MORE curious to guitarists than a compressor pedal. For some, it's something they can't live without; for others, it's completely unnecessary. This is understandable because, depending upon your rig and application, a compressor can do wonders for your tone — or get in the way of it. But for those looking for unimpeded and detailed sonic enhancement, consider the sterling Becos FX ComplIQ Mini Pro Compressor. Somehow, this specialized Romanian effect-pedal manufacturer managed to cram a studio-grade VCA-style compressor into a feature-laden mini-sized pedal. To say I'm flat-out impressed with this small wonder is no overstatement.

The ComplIQ Mini Pro, which is hand-built and designed for bass and guitar, features a 4320 THAT Analog Engine for processing its superior studio-quality compression, which is delivered through an efficient Blackmer VCA (voltage-controlled amplifier) and a true RMS-level detector that monitors the input signal. The pedal has controls for Ratio, Threshold, Gain and Dry/Wet Mix, along with three mini-toggle switches for Knee (soft/hard compression), SCF (Side Chain Filter) for audio signal and frequency attenuation (normal/deep) and Timing (fast/slower) that auto-adjusts attack and release times. The pedal also features true analog bypass switching, a 5-LED display (gain reduction meter derived from the RMS-level sensor for visual compression indication), input/output jacks and 9-12V DC operation.

With its considerable control set, players who are unfamiliar with compression terminology (and how it works) might find using the pedal daunting. But no need to stress! Within minutes it's easy to figure out how the controls and switches affect the dynamic range (much like rack compressors) and harmoniously work together to smoothly administer the amount of compression and limiting you're willing to feel and hear. Functionality is top-notch, and it's astounding that Becos can deliver such a high level of pristine compression in such a tiny housing. It's a stunningly beautiful and transparent compression that immediately enhances the overall sound dynamically — meaning it doesn't color your guitar tone but rather makes it sound more present and appear louder in a room. Simply setting the Gain and Ratio high and Threshold low, with a “soft” Knee and a “fast” attack, the ComplIQ Mini Pro intensifies my guitar sound while softening out any rough edges. It's so essential and good, I can't take it off my pedalboard — actually, I refuse to take it off. — *Paul Riario*

STREET PRICE: \$199

MANUFACTURER: Becos FX, becosfx.com



Precious

FENDER CHRISSIE HYNDE TELECASTER

By Chris Gill



IN MY HUMBLE opinion, any list of rock's greatest rhythm guitarists isn't valid if Chrissie Hynde isn't mentioned, preferably within the top half of the list or higher. Her playing on the Pretenders' debut album alone is a master course in badass rock rhythm guitar, from the Brit-pop jangle of "Kid" to the sophisticated art-punk of "Tattooed Love Boys" with its jagged 7/16 time signature and dazzling start/stop middle section, which baffled even the highly talented James Honeyman-Scott.

Fender's new Chrissie Hynde Telecaster is a very fitting — if long overdue — tribute to Ms. Hynde's monumental contributions to rock guitar coolness. In addition to its arresting appearance, it's also one hell of a Tele that will please aficionados of vintage jangle and twang.

FEATURES The Fender Chrissie Hynde Telecaster is a faithful replica of Hynde's favorite modified 1965 Tele dating back to the Pretenders' earliest days (she's holding it on the cover of the March 1981 issue of *Guitar World*, the mag's fifth issue, pictured above). Its medium-light weight alder body features a Faded Ice Blue Metallic nitrocellulose lacquer finish with "Road Worn" checking, and the neck conforms to mid-Sixties specs: maple with 7.25-inch radius rosewood fretboard, 21 narrow vintage tall frets, rounded C-shaped profile and 1.65-inch nut width. Modifications include the ultra-cool worn chrome mirror pickguard, thru-

body bridge with six stainless steel saddles, three-way blade pickup selector switch with Strat-style small, round and pointed tip and deluxe sealed locking tuners. The pickups are vintage voiced — our example measured 6.64k ohms resistance for the bridge pickup and 7.15k ohms for the neck. The package is generously accessorized with a deluxe hardshell case, custom white nylon strap and custom Chrissie Hynde sheriff's badge.

PERFORMANCE The Chrissie Hynde Tele looks truly tough with its icy blue metallic finish and chrome pickguard, and it further delivers the goods in tone and playability. The pickups provide the highly desirable but elusive combination of percussive twang and gritty growl perfect for ass-kicking rock rhythm and lead playing, with ample body and sustain that blossoms as the amp is pushed into overdrive. The voluptuously rounded contours of the neck feel uncannily comfortable, while the diminutive dimensions of the frets provide minimal resistance ideal for performing fleet-fingered runs and chord changes. The "Road Worn" wear and tear is subtle, with most of the finish checks only appearing under bright lights and the pickguard showing a rounded spot of natural-looking dullness where a player's picking hand usually comes into contact.

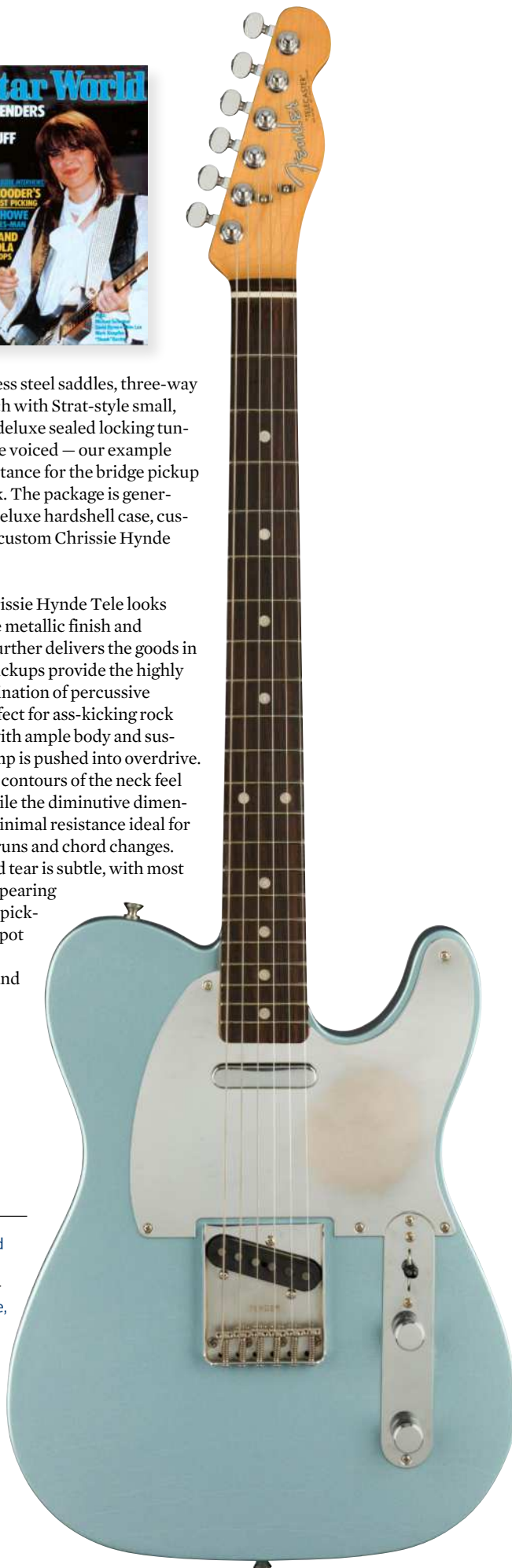
CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE: \$1,399.99

MANUFACTURER: Fender, fender.com

- The Faded Ice Blue Metallic nitrocellulose lacquer finish and chrome mirror pickguard match the distinctive looks of Hynde's iconic Tele.
- Performance upgrades to the otherwise mid-Sixties specs include a six-saddle bridge, locking tuners and Strat-style pickup switch tip.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:**
The Fender Chrissie Hynde Telecaster is simply an awesome rock and roll Tele with classy, eye-catching appearance and tough-as-nails tones.



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STRING
THEORY

by Jimmy Brown

For video of this lesson, go to
GuitarWorld.com/June2021I GOT RHYTHM,
PART 17

Using a half-time 16ths feel

LAST MONTH, I introduced 32nd notes, which may be thought of as “double-time 16ths.” I’d now like to offer an alternative way to approach this complex subdivision that’s easier to count. It involves tapping your foot in a “half-time feel,” or *cut time*. The way it works is you use the half note as the basic beat and foot-tapping unit instead of the quarter note. So, in $\frac{4}{4}$ meter, you would tap your foot only on beats 1 and 3.

Cut time meter may be indicated by the time signature $\frac{2}{2}$ (signifying two half notes) or the letter “c” with a vertical line through it. Or you could just use $\frac{4}{4}$ and write “with half-time feel.” So, by making half notes feel like quarter notes, the quarter notes then feel like eighths, eighths feel like 16ths, and 16ths feel like 32nds. This offers us a way to harness the *sound* of 32nd notes while avoiding 32nd-note notation and having to switch to a different counting scheme, which can be tricky.

To illustrate, I’ll show an original variation on the verse riff from “Sad But True” by Metallica, written and counted two different ways (see **FIGURES 1a** and **1b**). We’re in standard tuning and the key of A here, and we’re playing the last four notes twice as fast then repeating them. In **FIGURE 1a**, we’re using last month’s “double-time counting” for the 32nd notes. This works okay here, since it’s a straightforward, unsyncopated pattern, and the 32nd notes come at the end of the bar. But this counting approach can be potentially confusing. Be sure to proceed slowly and use the indicated pick strokes.

FIGURE 1b offers a more user-friendly transcription. Here we’re in cut time, and all the rhythmic values are doubled and thus simplified and spread out across two bars. The advantage here is we can stay with the standard 16th-note count for the last eight notes because they’re now 16ths. Repeat the figure several times, initially tapping your foot on all four beats, then only on beats 1 and 3, to achieve the desired half-time feel.

Our next example is a syncopated prog-metal-style riff inspired by “Immigrant Song” by Led Zeppelin but with a more complex, Tool-style rhythm. It’s based on a mathematical pattern that has you repeating a four-note motif and *displacing it forward* by one 16th note on each successive beat, which

FIG. 1 Slowly

A5

■ = downstroke
v = upstroke

N.C.

P.M. ————

a)

count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4

T 4/4

A 4/4

B 4/4

b)

count: 1 2 3 4

T 4/4

A 4/4

B 4/4

FIG. 2 w/half-time feel throughout

N.C. (F#5)

P.M. ————

a)

count: 1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

T 4/4

A 4/4

B 4/4

b)

P.M. ————

count: 1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

T 4/4

A 4/4

B 4/4

c)

P.M. ————

count: 1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

T 4/4

A 4/4

B 4/4

is a compositional approach we explored recently with my “Kashmir” spin-off riffs.

FIGURE 2a shows the riff, initially phrased with palm muting, staccato articulations and rests, then with ringing, unmuted notes and ties across certain beats. Again, proceed slowly and play both iterations of the two-bar figure several times, tapping your foot on all four beats at first, then only on “1” and “3.” Doing this creates what some musicians refer to as a *double-*

time half-time feel and gives us the sound of 32nd notes using “good old” 16ths.

FIGURES 2b and **2c** offer two interesting and challenging variations on the riff, for which I’ve removed the second or third note of the repeating four-note motif, respectively, in each case transforming it into a three-note idea. This “math-rock” riff writing approach can be used to create intricate and intense-sounding riffs and grooves... kind of like “YYZ” by Rush “on steroids.”

Senior Music Editor “Downtown” Jimmy Brown is an experienced, working musician, performer and private teacher in the greater NYC area whose mission is to entertain, enlighten and inspire people with his guitar playing.



**For video of this lesson, go to
GuitarWorld.com/June2021**

AROUND THE BENDS, PART 5

More bending techniques on the high E string

LET'S CONTINUE OUR examination of multiple string bending techniques on the high E string, using the E minor pentatonic scale (E, G, A, B, D) as our point of focus. The first column in this series (see *GW* February 2021) had us beginning with bending techniques on the B string based on E minor pentatonic, with each subsequent lesson moving higher up the fretboard while broadening our scale study from the five-note E minor pentatonic scale to the seven-note E Dorian mode (E, F \sharp , G, A, B, C \sharp , D).

Last month, we switched back to E minor pentatonic to look at string bending on the high E string, starting on the lower part of the fretboard. Let's now start on the 5th-fret A note and explore various bending concepts as we ascend the board while remaining *diatonic* to (within the scale structure of) E minor pentatonic. These examples are based on using two string bending approaches for each note in the scale: bending *up* to it from a lower note, and bending *down*, or back, to it by first pre-bending that note higher then releasing the bend.

In **FIGURE 1**, the A note on the high E string's 5th fret is bent up a whole step to B, released a half step to B_b, then pre-bent up to B again, followed by a whole-step bend and release. The phrase concludes by descending the E blues scale (E, G, A, B_b, B, D). So right here, three bending techniques are used from the A note: 1) bending it up a whole step, 2) releasing the bend by a half step, dropping the pitch from B to B_b, and 3) silently pre-bending the A note up to B before picking it. **FIGURE 2** reiterates the bending, partial releasing and pre-bending approaches used while fretting the A note.

The next higher note in E minor pentatonic is B. As demonstrated in **FIGURE 3**, we first fret the note normally, followed by a series of quick half-step bends from B_b, one fret below. The end of bar 1 through most of bar 2 is based on E blues-scale phrases, and the figure ends with reiterations of the B_b-to B half-step bends and releases.

Now let's bend *down* to B by repeatedly fretting the note and bending it up one and a half steps, to D, as shown in **FIGURE 4**. Bar 3 of this phrase makes use of what's known

FIG. 1

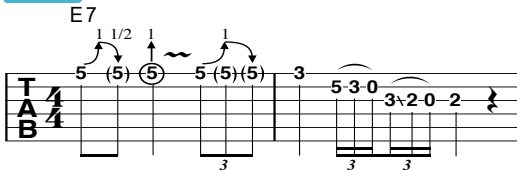
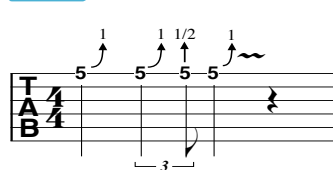
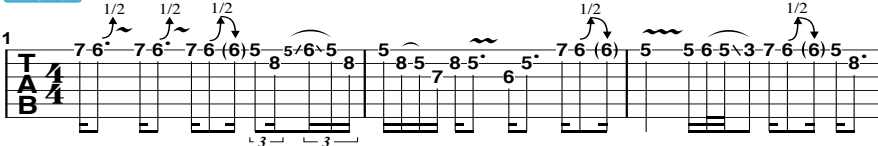
**FIG. 2****FIG. 3**

FIG. 4

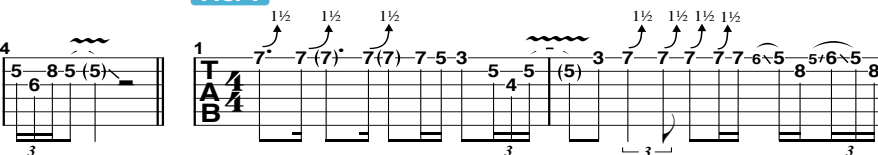
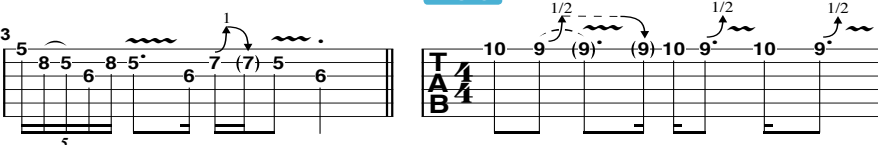
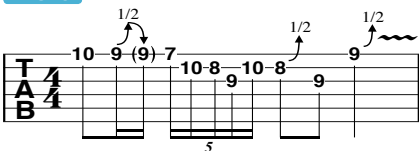
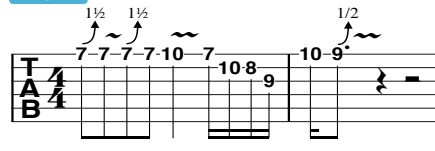
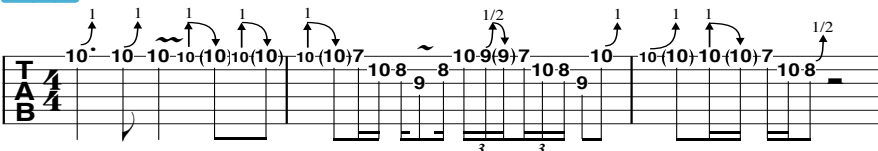
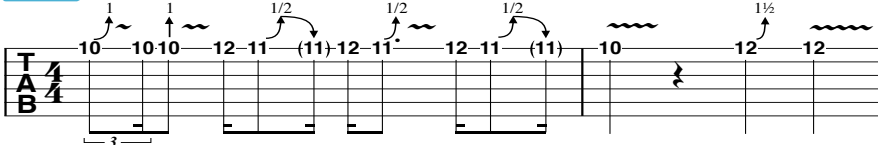
**FIG. 5****FIG. 6****FIG. 7****FIG. 8**

FIG. 9



as the “B.B. box,” a fretboard pattern named after blues guitar great B.B. King. The B.B. box is generally identified by the use of minor pentatonic notes on the B and high E strings combined with a major 6th (in the

key of E, that's C#) on the G string.

In **FIGURES 5-9**, I move up to each successive higher note in E minor pentatonic, creating melodic phrases by bending up to and back down to each note.

Guitar World Associate Editor Andy Aledort is recognized worldwide for his vast contributions to guitar instruction, via his many best-selling instructional DVDs, transcription books and online lessons.

THE GRISTLE REPORT

by Greg Koch



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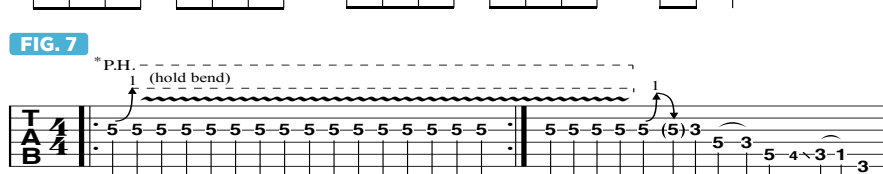
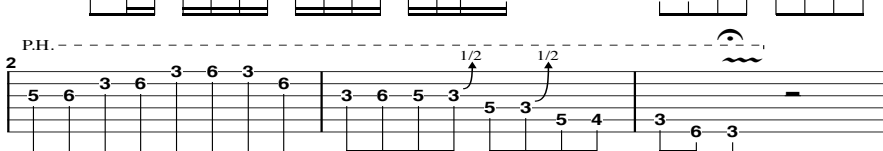
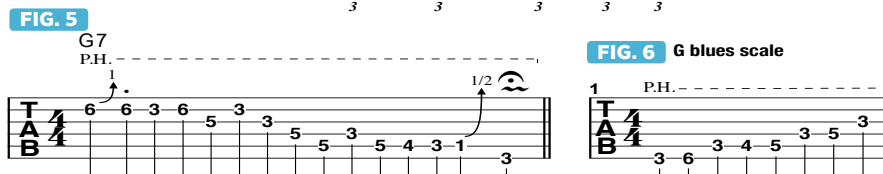
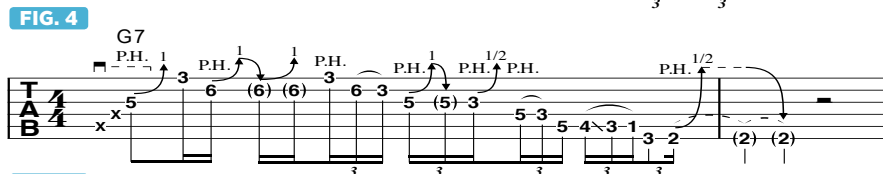
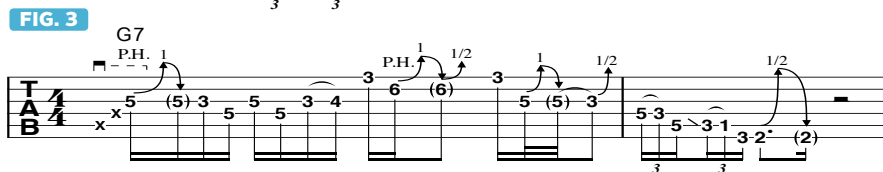
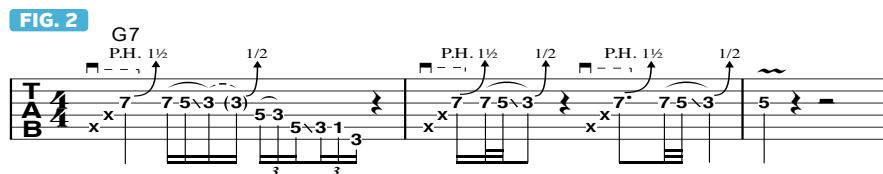
Exploring the wonderful world of pinch harmonics

HEY FOLKS! THIS month's column is dedicated to a technique I love to use when playing a Telecaster-style guitar set on the bridge pickup, especially with a little bit of distortion. The technique is a type of artificial harmonic known as a *pinch harmonic*, or "whistler," as the late, great Danny Gatton used to call it. When you pick the string just right, a higher pitch other than the fretted note is sounded. This higher pitch is an overtone, or harmonic, that stems from the overtone series related to that note. Indicated by the abbreviation P.H., the pinch harmonic is a fantastic expressive device to use when playing a solo or melody. Much beloved by rock, blues, country and metal guitarists alike, the pinch harmonic has been used to great effect by such legendary axemen as Roy Buchanan, Billy Gibbons, Eddie Van Halen and Zakk Wylde.

As the term implies, a pinch harmonic is sounded when one essentially "pinches down" on a string when picking it with a downstroke. Depending upon where along the length of the string you pick, different harmonics can be sounded at specific points. Generally speaking, the notes in the overtone series correspond to either the major 3rd, the 5th, the flatted 7th, the root note an octave higher or the 9th, although dedicated manipulation can yield other tones, which, when heard together with the fretted note, can yield some truly bizarre sounds. Danny coined the term "whistler" because, when the string is picked just right, the pinch harmonic produced is super high, often three octaves above that of the fretted note.

The way I and most guitarists produce a pinch harmonic is to grasp the pick close to its pointed tip with your thumb and index finger. You then pick a downstroke, intentionally allowing a bit of the fleshy part of the thumb to graze the string at the same time.

In **FIGURE 1**, I bend the D note on the G string's 7th fret up to F, and while holding the bend, I repeatedly pick the string, using the thumb-grazing technique. As I pick along the length of the string, different harmonics will sound. You'll need to seek them out by "hunting and pecking," repeatedly down-picking the string in the area over the pickups, as you move along the string's



* Gradually move picking from bridge towards fretboard.

length and listen for the harmonics.

A cool thing to do with a pinch harmonic is to rake into it, as exemplified in **FIGURE 2**. Drag the pick across the lower, fret-hand-muted strings before picking the note on the G string, getting equal parts thumb and pick into the attack. In **FIGURES 3 and 4**, I demonstrate moving the pinch harmonic technique between the G and B strings.

A great exercise is to try to sound a pinch harmonic on every note of a scale or melody you're playing, as shown in **FIGURES 5 and 6**. Another fun twist is to repeatedly pick a bent note while shaking, or vibrating, it with the fret hand and picking along the string at different points to produce varying harmonics. This technique is demonstrated in **FIGURE 7**.

Greg Koch is a large human who coaxes guitars into submission in a way that has left an indelible print on the psyches of many Earth dwellers. Visit GregKoch.com to check out his recordings, instructional materials, signature musical devices and colorful hats.

MELODIC
MUSE

by Andy Timmons

For video of this lesson, go to
GuitarWorld.com/June2021STEPPING
TONESTargeting chord tones when
soloing over a progression

ONE OF MY favorite techniques to use when soloing is to weave melodic lines while traversing the fretboard on a single string. Some of my favorite players, from Jimi Hendrix to Steve Vai, use this approach to great effect. Guitar players will often refer to moving up and down the board in this way as *horizontal playing*, as the lines are formed by the horizontal movement of the fret hand. By contrast, when one moves across multiple strings while remaining in one position, this is often referred to as vertical playing, also known as position playing.

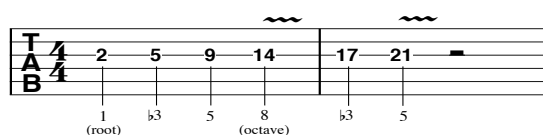
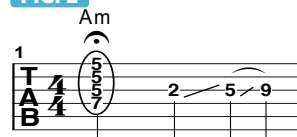
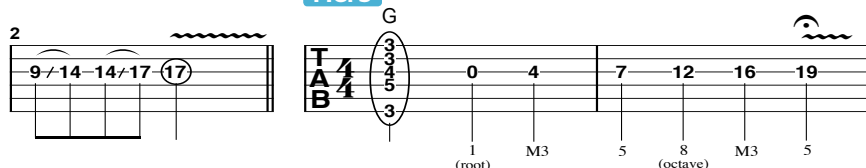
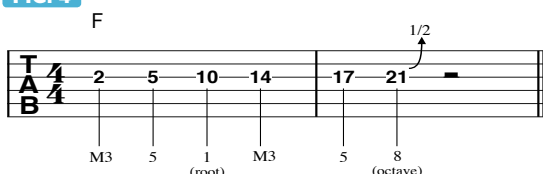
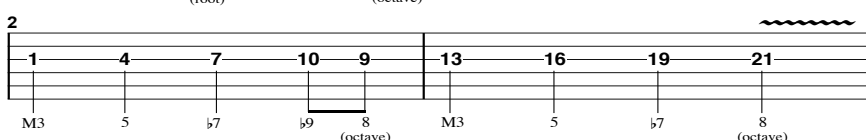
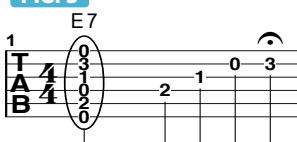
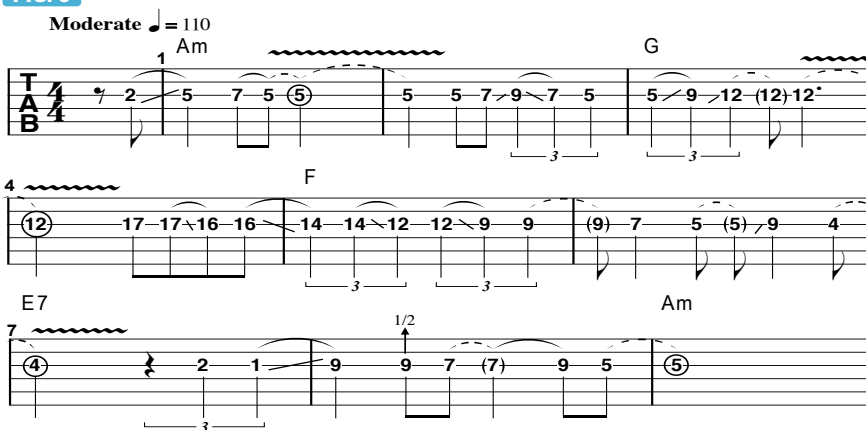
Last month, I introduced a chord progression to solo over: Am - G - F - E7. When playing over these chords, I demonstrated improvised lines based on the A natural minor scale (A, B, C, D, E, F, G), also known as the A Aeolian mode. As you recall, there's a slight twist when we get to the E7 chord, as the minor, or "flatted," 7th of A natural minor, G, is momentarily replaced by the major 7th G#, which is the major 3rd of E7 (E, G#, B, D) and provides a clear indication of the transition in the progression.

A key factor in my soloing approach is to always be aware of the triadic chord tones — the root, 3rd and 5th — inherent in each chord in the progression, as well as the extended tones for each chord, such as the 9th, 11th and 13th, or their altered counterparts, such as ♭9, ♯11 and ♭13. But it's best to start with the foundational triadic tones.

FIGURE 1 illustrates the triadic tones of Am: A (the root), C (the minor 3rd) and E (the 5th), played across two octaves as we move up the fretboard. In **FIGURE 2**, I play these notes within the framework of a rhythmic pattern of straight eighth notes.

FIGURE 3 details the chord tones of the next chord in the progression, G. The notes of the 1-3-5 triad are G, B and D. **FIGURE 4** illustrates the 1-3-5 for F — F, A, C — likewise expanded into a second octave. Here, we have to begin with the major third, A, as we are playing notes on the G string only.

FIGURE 5 addresses the last chord in the progression, E7. This chord offers a little more "information" that we can take advantage of in weaving melodic solos. The most significant aspect of E7 is that, as mentioned, it brings a G# into the picture, so it

FIG. 1 Am triadic chord tones, 3rd string**FIG. 2****FIG. 3****FIG. 4****FIG. 5****FIG. 6**

pulls the harmony away from A natural minor for a moment. The ♭7th, D, sounds great too, as it serves to describe the dominant quality of E7, as compared to the straight triads presented for the other three chords.

Let's put all this information into action in an improvised melody. **FIGURE 6** offers an eight-bar solo that's built from the target note concept. As each new chord arrives in the progression, I target at least one of its

triadic tones, so that my melody aligns with the inherent harmony in the chord progression itself. When the E7 arrives, in bar 7, I also bring the ♭9 of E, an F note, into play, as it offers the feeling of harmonic resolution back to the chord tones of E7.

Now try soloing over this progression yourself, keeping the chord tones in mind while aiming to craft melodies that are musically lyrical and pleasing.

Andy Timmons is a world-renowned guitarist known for his work with the Andy Timmons Band, as well as Danger Danger and Simon Phillips. Visit andytimmons.com and guitarxperience.net to check out his recordings and many instructional releases

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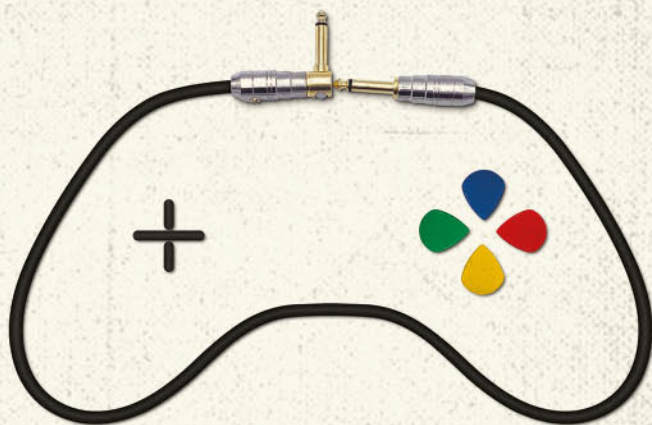
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PERFORMANCE NOTES

...HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS...



"SITTIN' ON TOP OF THE WORLD"

Billy Strings & Molly Tuttle



CAPTURED ON VIDEO at the 2019 Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival, this spirited live performance of a popular old standard features

two of today's most celebrated young lions of bluegrass — Billy Strings and Molly Tuttle — jamming and taking exciting, virtuosic solos over the tune's uptempo groove and "key of G" chord changes, with both guitars capo-ed at the 2nd fret, transposing everything up a whole step to the concert key of A.

Billy kicks off the tune in free time by initiating a series of soulful call-and-response vocal and guitar phrases, with Molly (Gtr. 2) entering in bar 7 and interjecting her own "answer" runs. Notice in these initial phrases, and also later in the performance, when the brisk tempo and "two feel" groove kick in and the two guitarists take solos "in time," how they both masterfully craft musical melodies using notes from two parallel scales: G minor blues, also known more simply as G blues (G, B \flat , C, D \flat , D, F), and G major blues (G, A, B \flat , B, D, E). The latter may be thought of as being the relative-major equivalent of the E minor blues, or E blues, scale (E, G, A, B \flat , B, D). This works the same way as using parallel major and minor pentatonics built from the same root note — for example, G minor pentatonic and G major pentatonic — the only difference being the addition of a chromatic passing tone in each scale (D \flat and B \flat , respectively). And so, altogether, you have a lot of "blue notes," namely the $\flat 3$ (B \flat in the key of G major), the $\flat 5$ (D \flat) and $\flat 7$ (F), which really put the *blue* in bluegrass!

The real artistry on display here, however, is not just in the use of scales, but in the ways in which both guitarists tastefully and creatively *contour* their melodies with frequent changes in direction — ascending then descending, and vice versa — and break up the machine-gun-like alternate picking with hammer-ons, pull-offs and legato finger slides, all of which are part of the art of flatpicking. And being able to play with such speed and fluency on acoustic guitars, with their stiff, wound G strings, is an impressive technical feat that requires a lot of practice and conditioning to do!

— JIMMY BROWN



"THE BALLROOM BLITZ"

The Sweet



THIS DELIGHTFULLY FUN

glam-rock hit from 1973 serves up some catchy uptempo riffs and vocal accompaniments, complements of guitarist

Andy Scott. Using Chuck Berry-approved root-5th power chords as a foundation, with boogie-style root-6th and root- $\flat 7$ th "extensions," Scott adds melodic activity and interest to the chords and creates a strong feeling of forward motion throughout the song's intro and verses.

The two-note E7 chord — which is technically "E7(no3)" — requires a painfully wide five-fret stretch, between the 1st and 4th fingers at the 7th and 12th frets, respectively. When reaching for this chord, you'll find it very helpful and relieving to momentarily let go of the B note on the D string's 9th with your 3rd finger, so that it can drift up slightly, following the 4th finger, which will partially alleviate the physical demand of the stretch. Another option is to fret the E5 chord with your 1st and 2nd fingers here, which will give you more reach for grabbing the E6 and E7 grips. The same alternate-fingering option advice applies to the A5 chord in the verses, to reach the A6 more comfortably. But you'll obviously want to revert back to using your 3rd finger for the three-note A5 voicing used in the pre-chorus and chorus sections (see rehearsal letters D and E).

A couple more pointers:

1) Be careful when performing the quick power chord shifts in the song's pre-chorus and chorus sections. Don't accidentally overshoot or undershoot the chord change by a fret, and don't let go of the strings or squeeze them any harder than necessary to fret the notes cleanly when shifting.

2) The song is played with an uptempo shuffle groove, as indicated by the "swing 16ths" marking at the beginning. At this tempo, the difference between swinging 16th notes and even, or "straight," 16ths is subtle, but still distinct and crucial to achieving the desired feel, which is loose and slightly lopsided, yet flowing. As always, it comes down to using your ears to guide you, so be sure to play along with the recording at first.

— JIMMY BROWN



"SOUTH OF HEAVEN"

Slayer



THE HAUNTING OPENING riff

from this Eighties thrash metal classic is by itself worth the price of admission here, as guitarists Jeff Hanneman and

Kerry King lay down an eerie, goosebump-inducing harmony-leads melody that sounds like it's from the "dark ages" but with a modern twist. The use of perfect 4th intervals between the two single-note guitar parts and chromatically descending parallel major 3rds bears a strong resemblance to and sounds like it may have been inspired by the classical piece "In the Hall of the Mountain King," written by Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg in 1875. And the half-step trill at the end of bar 4 brings to mind Toni Iommi's seminal and equally haunting riff in the song "Black Sabbath."

Interestingly, the mix at the beginning of the song has both of the dry guitar tracks panned together, hard left, so that they sound like one instrument, while their long-tail reverb returns create a spooky audio "shadow" in the right side of the stereo image. And although it is possible to consolidate and play both parts on one guitar and combine the finger vibratos, the sonic result would not be as clear and "cutting" as the two-guitar arrangement.

The recurring riff is a harmonic hybrid of the E blues scale (E, G, A, B \flat , B, D) and the E Mixolydian mode (E, F \sharp , G \sharp , A, B, C \sharp , D) and, over the course of four bars, conveys an interesting variety of musical colors and shades of brightness and darkness. Notice that, at section B (bar 13), Hanneman, who wrote the riff, plays a slight variation on the lower, foundational line, specifically on the third note, where he substitutes E (A string, 7th fret) for F \sharp (9th fret), which works equally well and perhaps sounds better and more straightforward in this stand-alone single-note version of the riff.

Both King and Hanneman make great use of their guitars' whammy bars in their solos, with aggressive vibratos and deep, gut-wrenching dives. These kinds of metal pyrotechnics are best performed on guitars with locking tremolo systems, which prevent the strings from going out of tune.

— JIMMY BROWN

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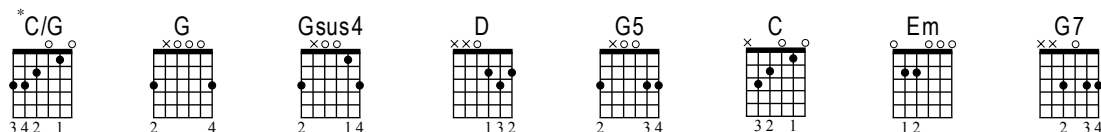
(LIVE AT GREY FOX BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL 2019)

Billy Strings and Molly Tuttle

As heard on **YOUTUBE**

Words and Music by WALTER VINSON and LONNIE CHATMON • Transcribed by JEFF PERRIN

Guitars 1 and 2 are capoed at the 2nd fret.



*All tab positions and chord frames for Gtrs. 1 and 2 are relative to the capo. All music sounds in the key of A.

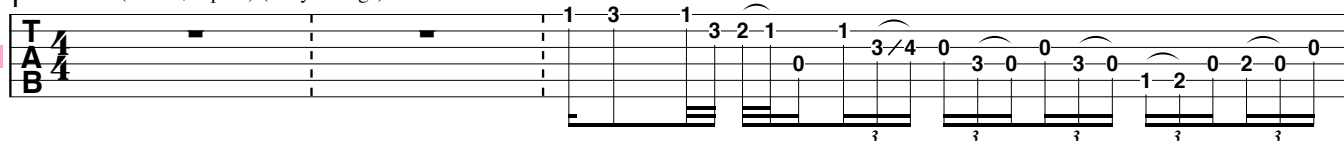
A Intro (0:00)

Freely

Well was in the spring one sunny day

N.C. (G)

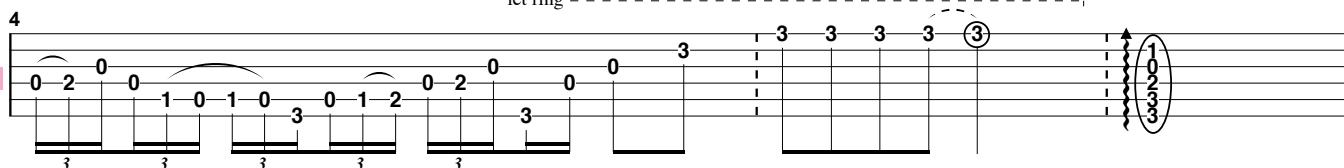
Gtr. 1 (acous., capo 2) (Billy Strings)



Well my good gal left me she went away

let ring

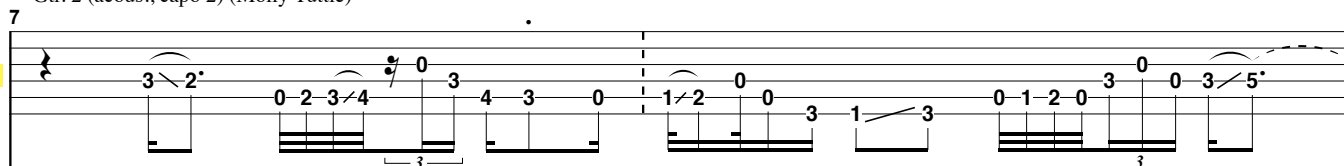
C/G



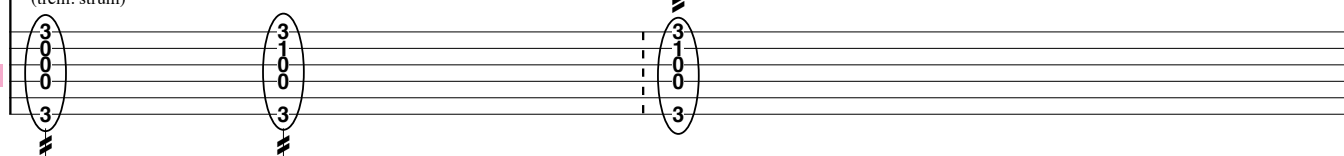
G

Gadd4

Gtr. 2 (acous., capo 2) (Molly Tuttle)



Gtr. 1
(trem. strum)

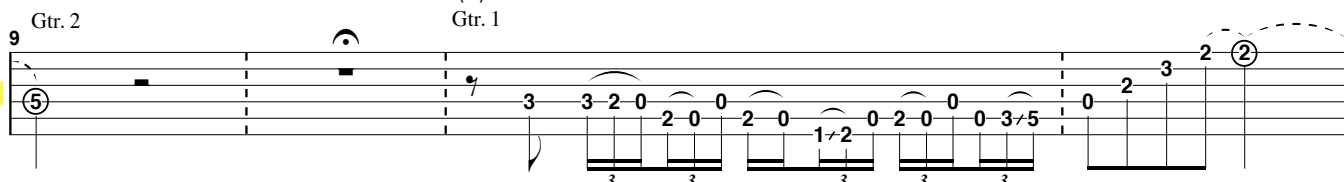


And now she's gone I don't worry

(D)

D

Lord I'm



sittin' on top of the world

(G)

13

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

(let ring into next bar)

(♩ = 142)

(One

two

One

two

ee)

16

Gtr. 1

Bass

B 1st Guitar Solo (Billy Strings) (0:43)

G5

Gtr. 1

19

Gtr. 2

Rhy. Fig. 1

*[A]

Bass

Bass Fig. 1

*Bracketed chord symbols refer to the concert-key tuning.

23 C G5

27 Em

31 G5 D G5

[D] [A] [F#]

let ring - 1

end Rhy. Fig. 1

end Bass Fig. 1

The image displays a guitar tablature for the song "Sittin' on Top of the World". It is organized into three systems, each with three staves: a top staff for the main melody, a middle staff for a rhythmic accompaniment, and a bottom staff for a bass line. The first system (measures 23-26) is in the key of C major, with a G5 barre. The second system (measures 27-30) is in the key of E minor, with an F# barre. The third system (measures 31-34) returns to the key of C major, with G5 and D barres. The tablature includes various fret numbers (0-7), accidentals (sharps, naturals), and articulation marks like slurs and accents. Specific instructions include "let ring - 1" and "end Rhy. Fig. 1".

G5

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 19)

Gtr. 1

35 *Gtr. 1*

3 0 1 3 0 1 0 | 3 1 3/4 2 0 2 0 | 0 0 3 0 0 0 3 0 | 0 0 3 0 5 3 4 5

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see bar 19)

39 C G5

39 C G5

43

Em

3 3 3 4 3 3 3 3

3 3 5 6 3 5 3

5 3 6 3 5 3 5 3

6 3 5 3 5 0 2

1. She called me

47 G5 D G5

2 3 0 1 0 3 1 3 0 3 0 3 0 2 0 2 0 0 2 0 1 2 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

C **Verses / Fiddle Solo*** (1:10, 1:50, 2:04, 2:58)

(1.) up	from El Paso	Said	come back
(2.) running	holding out your hand	Gonna	get me a
(3.) ashes	and dust to dust	Show	me a woman

G

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 19)

Gtr. 2 substitutes Fill 1, 2nd verse (see below)

Gtr. 1

[A]


Bass

[illegible]

*Play through as Fiddle solo, 3rd time.

Fill 1 (1:50)

G

 Gtr. 2

T **4** **0**
A **4**
B

daddy woman mama Well I need you so Now she's
like you got your man trust Now she's
that a man can trust Now she's

55

C G

[D] [A]

gone I don't worry I'm
gone I don't worry I'm
gone I don't worry I'm

G Em

59

[A] [F#]

2nd time, go back to [C] verse section as Fiddle solo (bar 48)

3rd time, skip ahead to [E] (bar 96)

4th time, skip ahead to [G] Outro (bar 144)

sittin' on top of the world Well she's
sittin' on top of the world
sittin' on top of the world

G D G

63

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

[A] [E] [A]

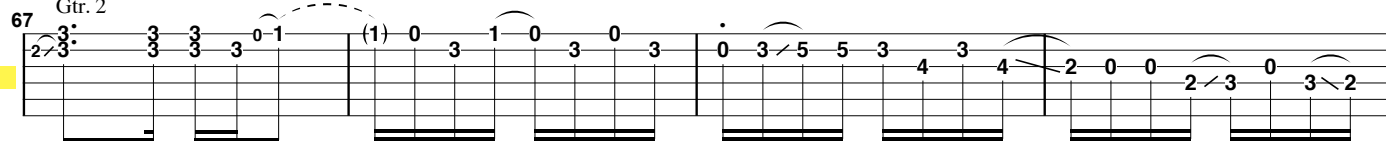
Bass

D 2nd Guitar Solo (Molly Tuttle) (1:23)

G

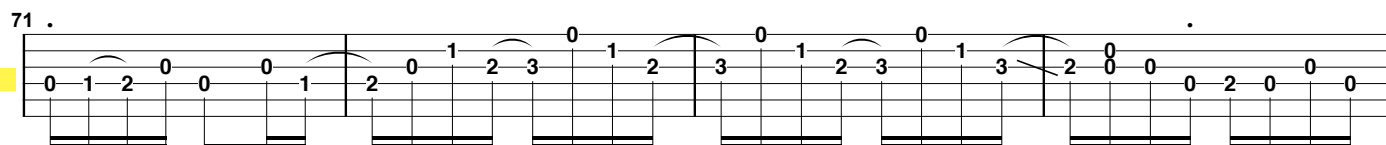
Gr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1, twice simile (see bar 19)

Gr. 2

*Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice, simile (see bar 19)*

C

G



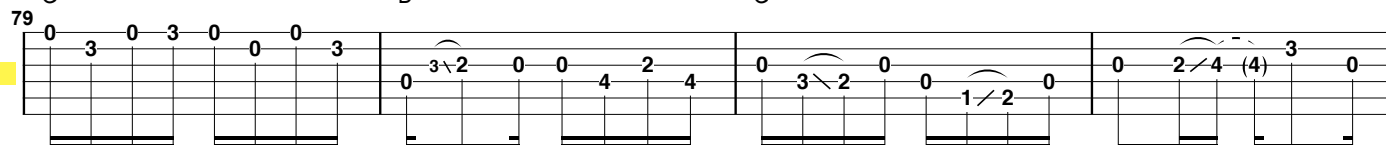
Em



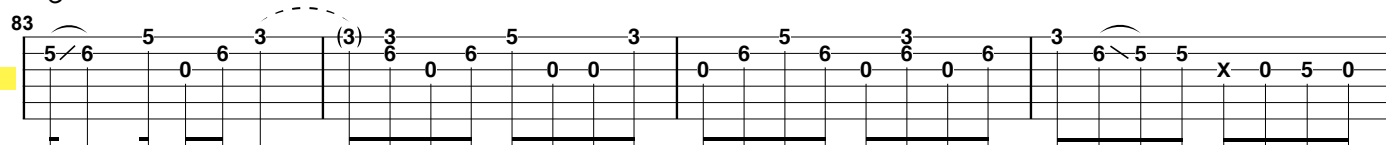
G

D

G

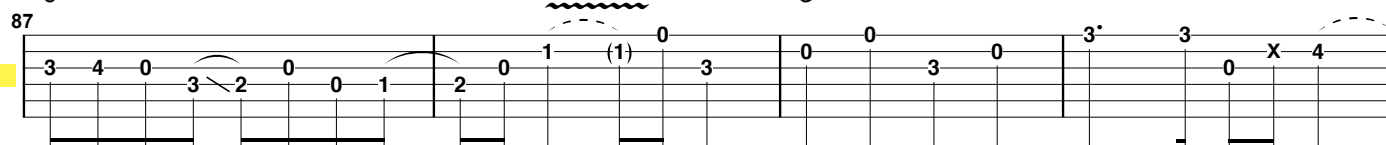


G

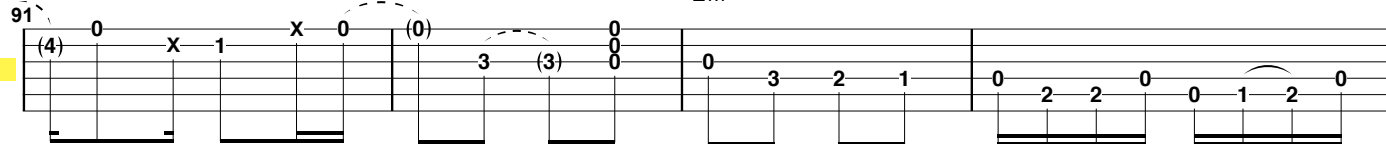
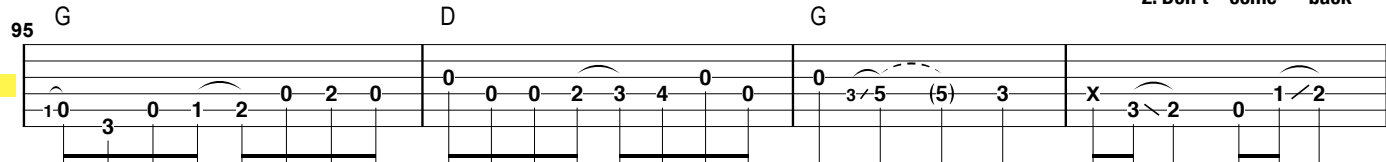


C

G



Em

*Go back to [C] 2nd verse (bar 48)***2. Don't come back**

E Fiddle Solo (cont.) (2:18)

G

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 19)

Gtr. 1

99

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see bar 19)

G7

C

103

G

107

Em

G5

D

G

111

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

F "Trading Fours" Guitar Solo (Billy Strings*) (2:31)

G

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1, twice simile (see bar 19)

Gtr. 1

115

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice, simile (see bar 19)

**Due to a concert production issue, Tuttle's guitar solos are unfortunately inaudible during this section.*

C

G

119

123 Em

P.M. ---

127 G D G

131

135 C G

139 Em

143 G D G

147 G5 Em

3. Ashes to

G **Outro (3:11)**

gone I don't worry I'm

G5 Em

Gtrs. 1 and 2

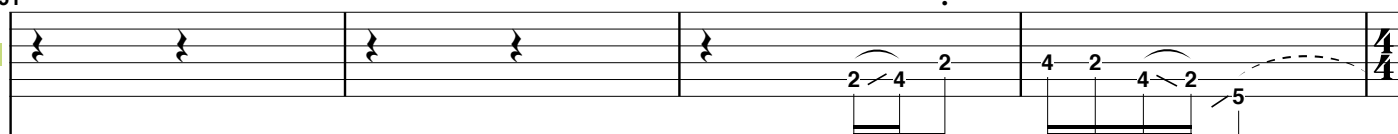
[A] Bass

[F#]

sittin' on top of the world

[A] [E] [A]

151 Gtr. 3 (elec. w/clean tone)

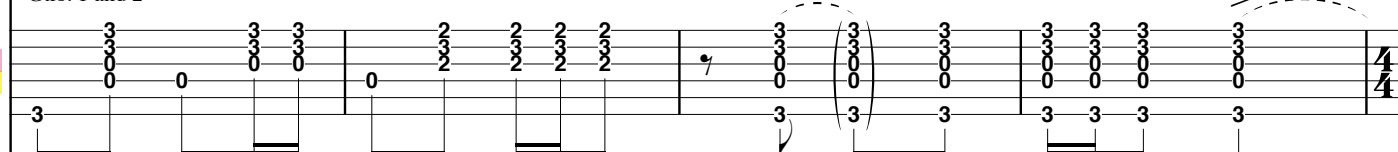


G5

D

G5

Gtrs. 1 and 2

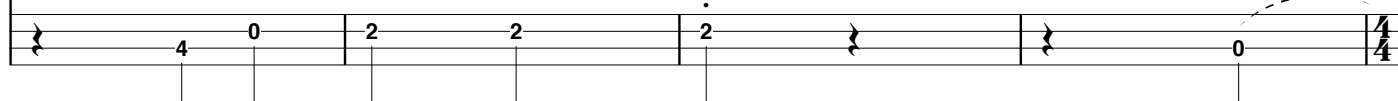


[A]

[E]

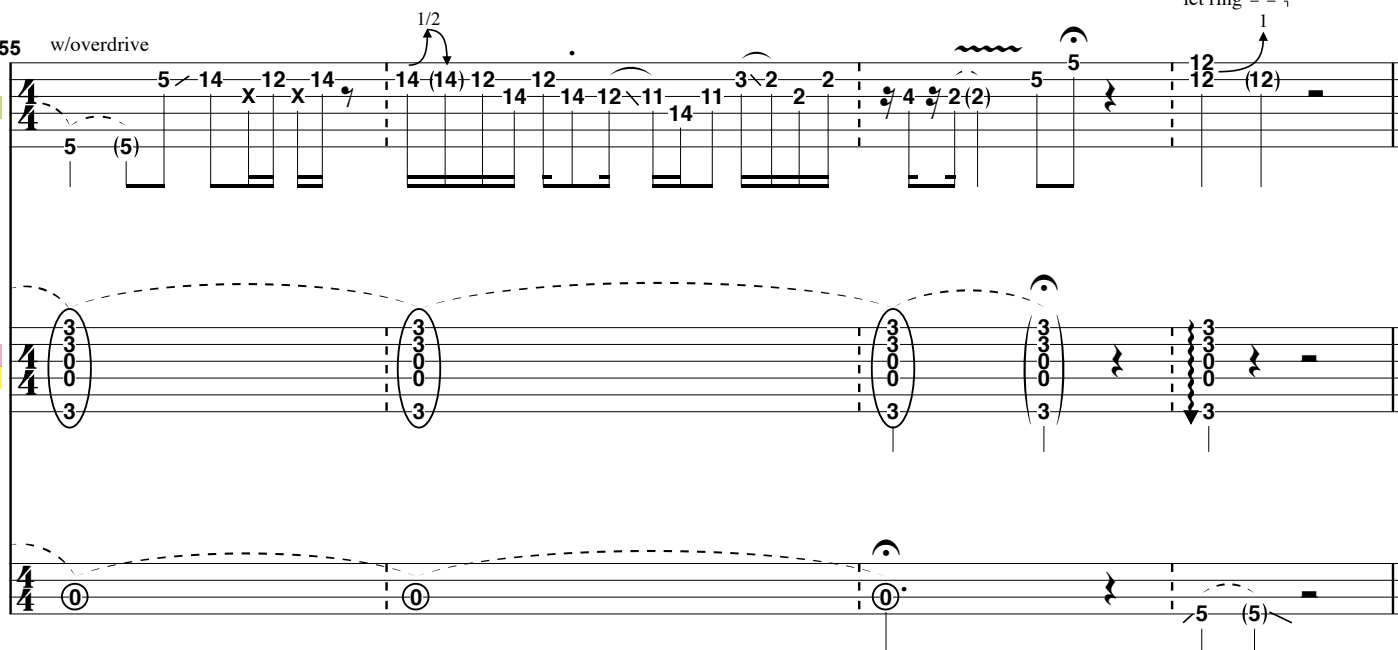
[A]

Bass



Freely

155 w/overdrive



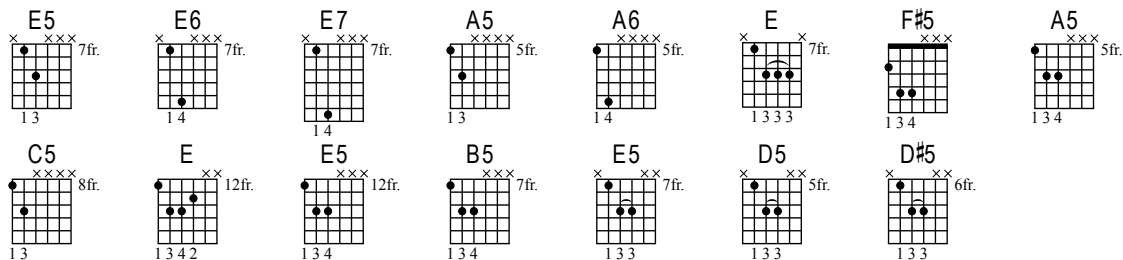
“THE BALLROOM BLITZ”

The Sweet


As heard on **DESOLATION BOULEVARD**

Words and Music by **MIKE CHAPMAN** and **MICKY CHINN**

Transcribed by **JEFF PERRIN**



A Intro (0:00)

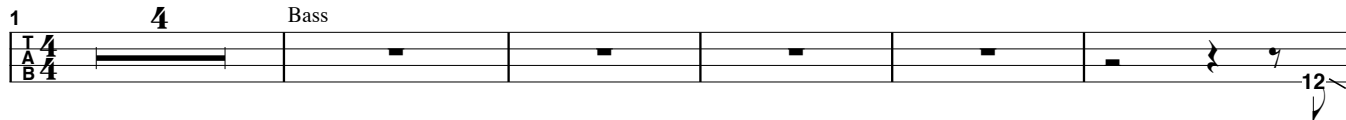
Moderately ♩ = 108 ()

Spoken: **Are you ready Steve? (Uh-huh) Andy? (Yeah) Mick? (Okay) All right fellas A-let's go!**

(drums)

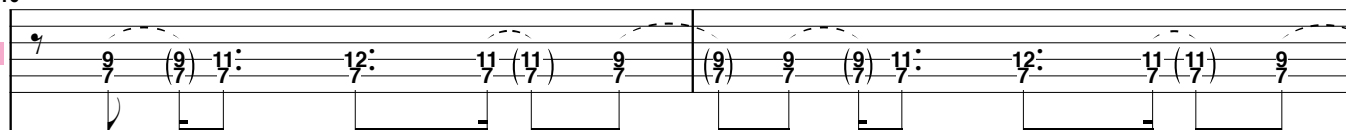
N.C.

Bass



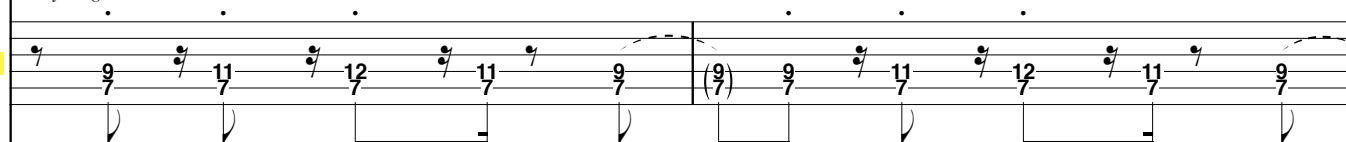
E5 E6 E7 E6 E5 E6 E7 E6 E5

10 Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.)



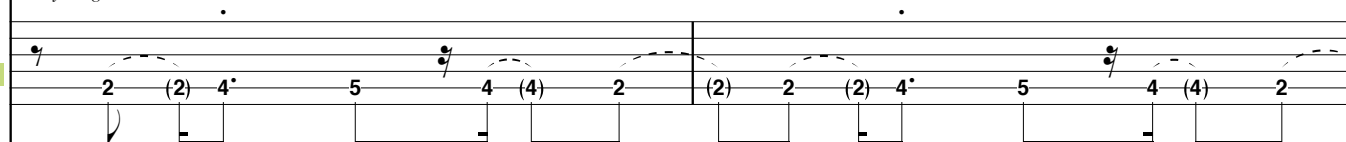
Gtr. 2 (elec. w/overdriven tone)

Rhy. Fig. 1

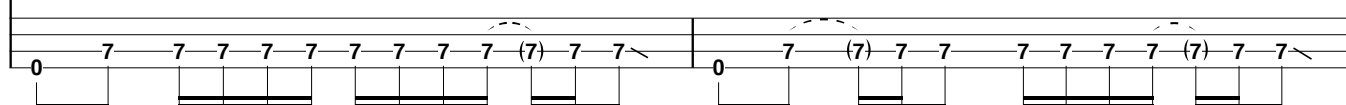


Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)

Rhy. Fig. 1a -



Bass



1. Oh

E5 E6 E7 E6 E5 E6 E7 E6 E5

12

(9) 9 (9) 11: 12: 11 (11) 9 (9) 9 (9) 11: 12: 11 (11) 9 X

end Rhy. Fig. 1

(9) 9 11 12 11 9 (9) 9 11 12 11 9

(2) 2 (2) 4* 5 4 (4) 2 (2) 2 (2) 4* 5 4 (4)

Bass Fig. 1

0 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 (7) 7 7 0 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 3

B Verses (0:29, 1:35)

It's been gettin' so hard livin' with the things you do ever to me
 reaching out for something Touching nothing's all I do do

A5 A6 A5 A6 A5 A6 A5 A6

Gtrs. 1 and 2

P.M.

14

7 7 9 9 7 7 7 9 9 9 X 7 7 9 9 7 7 7 9 9 9 X

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

Bass
Bass Fig. 2

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

Ah - ha

Oh

My
I

E5 E6 E7 E6 E5 E6 E7 E6 E5

Gtr. 2 plays first four bars of Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 10)

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a (see bar 10)

Gtr. 1

16

X X 9 (9) 11: 12: 11 (11) 9 (9) 9 (9) 11: 12: 11 (11) X 5

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 12)

18 P.M.

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 14)

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a (see bar 10)

20 Gtr. 1

Bass

C (0:46, 1:53)

N.C.

*Gtrs. 1 and 2 substitute Rhy. Fill 1,
2nd time (see below bar 69)*

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Bass

*Top note played by Gtr. 2 only.

D Pre-chorus (0:57, 2:04, 2:46)

(1., 3.) lightning everybody was frightening And the music was soothing
(2.) So frantically hectic And the band started leaving 'Cause they all stopped

F#5 A5 C5

27 Gtr. 3

Gtrs. 1 and 2
P.M.

Bass

grooving
breathing

Yeah
Yeah

yeah
yeah

yeah
yeah

yeah
yeah

yeah
yeah

And the
And the

30 E5
Gtr. 3

E
Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2
P.M.

Bass

E Chorus (1:08, 2:15, 2:57)

man in the back said everyone attack And it turned into a ballroom blitz And the girl in the corner said Boy I wanna warn ya It'll

F#5 A5 B5 E5 F#5 A5

32 Gtrs. 1 and 2
P.M.

Bass

2nd chorus, skip ahead
to [G] Interlude (bar 44)

turn into a ballroom blitz Ballroom blitz Ballroom blitz

B5 E5 D5 D#5 E5 D5 D#5 E5 D5 D#5

35 P.M. -----, *N.H. -----, N.H. -----,

* N.H. pitch: B (index- and ring-finger string mutes produce additional random natural harmonics on adjacent strings.)

3rd chorus, skip ahead to [H] (bar 52)

blitz Ballroom blitz

E5 N.H. -----, D5 D#5 E5 N.H. -----,

38

[F] (1:26)

Go back to [B] 2nd verse (bar 14)

E5 E6 E7 E6 E5 E6 E7 E6 E5 E6 E7 E6 E5 E6 E7 E6 E5

Gr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 10)

40 Gr. 3

Gtr. 1

Bass

Rhy. Fill 1 (1:53)

E5
Gtrs. 1 and 2

TAB

G Interlude (2:24)

blitz

E5 N.C.

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Gtr. 1

D5 D#5 N.C.(E5)

D5 N.C(E5)

D5 D#5

44

Rhy. Fig. 3

Musical notation for guitar and bass in the Interlude section, measures 44-47. The guitar part features a series of chords and a rhythmic figure (Rhy. Fig. 3). The bass part features a series of eighth notes and a rhythmic figure (Bass Fig. 3).

N.C.(E5)

D5

N.C.(E5)

D5

D#5

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 46)

Gtr. 3

let ring

let ring

Musical notation for guitar and bass in the Interlude section, measures 48-51. The guitar part features a series of chords and a rhythmic figure (Rhy. Fig. 3). The bass part features a series of eighth notes and a rhythmic figure (Bass Fig. 3).

Bass plays first bar of Bass Fig. 3 twice (see bar 46)

Go back to **D** Pre-chorus (bar 27)

E5

Oh

yeah

It was like

50 Gtrs. 1 and 3

Musical notation for guitar and bass in the Interlude section, measures 50-51. The guitar part features a series of chords and a rhythmic figure (Rhy. Fig. 3). The bass part features a series of eighth notes and a rhythmic figure (Bass Fig. 3).

H (3:15)

1.

2.

It's

it's

a ballroom

blitz

It's

it's

a ballroom

blitz

Yeah

it's a ballroom

blitz

N.C.(E5) E5

G5 D5

N.C.(E5) E5

N.C.(E5) E5

52 Gtrs. 1 and 2

Musical notation for guitar and bass in the Interlude section, measures 52-53. The guitar part features a series of chords and a rhythmic figure (Rhy. Fig. 3). The bass part features a series of eighth notes and a rhythmic figure (Bass Fig. 3).

Bass plays first bar of Bass Fig. 3 twice (see bar 46)

E5 E6 E7 E6 E5 E6 E7 E6 E5

Gtr. 2

E5
Gr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 six times, simile (see bar 56)
Gr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 4a six times, simile (see bar 56)
 Gr. 3

Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 twice, simile (see bar 56)

Bass

(Begin fade)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 5 six times (see bar 63)

pitches: D
A

Fade

```
let ring = - - - -;
```


“SOUTH OF HEAVEN”

Slayer

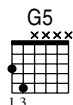
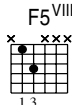
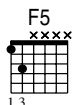
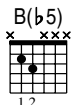
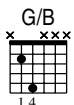
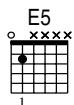
As heard on **SOUTH OF HEAVEN**

Words by TOM ARAYA • Music by JEFF HANNEMAN • Transcribed by JEFF PERRIN

All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat B \flat E \flat).

Bass tuning (low to high): E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat .

All notes and chords sound one half step lower than written (key of E \flat minor).



A Intro (0:00)

Moderate Death Metal ♩ = 106

Half-time Feel

N.C.(E5)

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.)

Riff A

1

TAB

mf

*let 6th string ring throughout

P.M.

end Riff A

TAB

mp

end Riff A1

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A (see meas. 1)

Gtr. 2 plays Riff A1 (see meas. 1)

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)

5

mf

pitches: B E

N.H. (pull up on bar slightly)

N.H. w/bar

N.H. w/bar

B (0:36)

(gradually increase tempo to ♩ = 116)

E5

*Gtr. 1 plays Riff A (see meas. 1)

Gtr. 2

Riff B

(2nd time) 1. An

12

f

end Riff B

*Gtr. 4

f

end Rhy. Fig. 1

overdub

f

end Bass Fig. 1

2

end Bass Fig. 1

2

end Bass Fig. 1

2

end Bass Fig. 1

2

end Bass Fig. 1

2

end Bass Fig. 1

2

end Bass Fig. 1

“SOUTH OF HEAVEN”

WORDS AND MUSIC BY JEFF HANNEMAN AND TOM ARAYA

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C 1st Verse (0:53)

unforeseen future nestled somewhere in time

Unsuspecting victims no warnings no signs

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A twice (see meas. 1)

Gtr. 2 plays Riff B twice (see meas. 13)

Gtr. 4

P.M.

17 * (repeat previous measure)

2 0 *repeat previous chord

Bass
Bass Fig. 2

end Bass Fig. 2

mp

Judgement Day the second coming arrives

Before you see the light

you must die

Gtr. 4

P.M.

21

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see meas. 17)

D (1:09)

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A (see meas. 1)

Gtr. 2

25

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see meas. 13)

E5 G/B E5 B(b5) E5

G/B F5

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 2

P.M.

end Rhy. Fig. 2

29

Gtr. 2

Bass
Bass Fig. 3

end Bass Fig. 3

E5
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see meas. 29)

F5 VIII E5

Gtr. 2

P.M.

2. For-
(F5)

33

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 (see meas. 29)

Fill 1 (3:22) *

Gtr. 3

w/bar
(dive to "slack")

*vibrato bar "dip"

mf

Fill 2 (3:39)

Gtr. 3

(pick scrape)



E 2nd, 3rd and 4th Verses (1:42, 2:26, 3:22)

(end half-time feel, gradually increase tempo to ♩ = 136)

- (2.) gotten children confirm a new faith Avidity and lust controlled by hate The
 never-ending search for your Shattered sanity Souls of damnation in their own reality fathers deity
 3. Bastard sons begat your cunting daughters Promiscuous mothers with your incestuous fathers
 Engrest souls condemned for all eternity Sustained by immoral observance a domineering deity
 (4.) root of all evil is the heart of a black soul A force that has lived all eternity The
 never-ending search for a truth never told The loss of all hope and your dignity

(E5) G5 (E5) F5 E5 G5 E5 F5

Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 on 4th verse

Gtrs. 1 and 2

37 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass

(2nd time) To Coda I

(skip ahead to meas. 53)

(3rd time) To Coda II

(skip ahead to meas. 69)

F Pre-chorus (1:56, 2:40, 3:35)

- (1., 3.) Chaos rampant in an age of distrust confrontations impulsive habitat
 (2.) Chaos rampant in an age of distrust confrontations impulsive Sabbath
 N.C.(F#5) C5/G (F#5) Bb5 (G5)(F#5)(F)

Gtr. 3

Gtr. 3 substitutes Fill 2 on 4th verse w/fdbk.

41

Gtrs. 1 and 2
P.M. P.M. P.M.

*dive w/bar
*pull up on bar on 3rd verse

Bass

G (2:03)

♩ = 124 (w/half-time feel)

N.C.(E5)

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A (see meas. 1)

45 Gtr. 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see meas. 13)

D.S. at Coda I
 (go back to **E**)

E5 G B(b5) E5 G/B F5 E5 G/B B(b5) E5 G/B F5 VIII

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see meas. 29)

49 Gtr. 2 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 simile (see meas. 29)

*Gtr. 1 plays note in parenthesis

\oplus Coda I

[H] 1st Chorus (2:47)

On and on South of Heaven

(E5) G#5 G5 (E5) G5 F#5 (E5)

N.C.

On and on South of Heaven

G#5 G5 (E5) F#5 (E5)

N.C.

Gtrs. 1 and 2

P.M. . . .

P.M. . . .

P.M. . . .

(play 3 times)

Gtr. 3

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 3 (see meas. 53)

53 0 0 6 5 0 0 4 0 0 0 0 1 2 3

54 0 0 4 3 0 0 3 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 1

55 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

56 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

[I] 1st Guitar Solo (3:01)

(w/double-time feel)

N.C. (E5)

P.H.

F5

(E5)

G#5

(E5)

G5

(E5)

F5

(E5)

G#5

(E5)

G5

57 5 5 (5) 0 5 5 (5) 3 17 16 15 (14) 20 20 20 (20) 18 17 17 17 (17) 21 22

58 5 5 (5) 0 5 5 (5) 3 17 16 15 (14) 20 20 20 (20) 18 17 17 17 (17) 21 22

59 5 5 (5) 0 5 5 (5) 3 17 16 15 (14) 20 20 20 (20) 18 17 17 17 (17) 21 22

60 5 5 (5) 0 5 5 (5) 3 17 16 15 (14) 20 20 20 (20) 18 17 17 17 (17) 21 22

P.H. pitch: G#

(dive w/bar)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Rhy. Fig. 4

P.M. . . .

P.M. . . .

P.M. . . .

end Rhy. Fig. 4

61 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

62 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

63 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

64 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Bass

Bass Fig. 4

end Bass Fig. 4

65 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

66 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

67 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

68 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

(E5)

F5

(E5)

G#5

(E5)

G5

Gtr. 3 full

full

(22)

19 19

24 24

21 19

21 21

19 19

22 22

Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 twice (see meas. 57)

(E5)

F5

(E5)

G#5

(E5)

G5

69 12 12 14 12 14 12 12 12 14 14 12 12 14 12 15 12

70 12 12 14 12 14 12 12 12 14 14 12 12 14 12 15 12

71 12 12 14 12 14 12 12 12 14 14 12 12 14 12 15 12

72 12 12 14 12 14 12 12 12 14 14 12 12 14 12 15 12

(E5)

F5

(E5)

G#5

(E5)

G5

73 17 17 15 14 15 14 18 16 16 15 16 15 18 18 17 16 19 17 16 20 20 21 22

74 17 17 15 14 15 14 18 16 16 15 16 15 18 18 17 16 19 17 16 20 20 21 22

75 17 17 15 14 15 14 18 16 16 15 16 15 18 18 17 16 19 17 16 20 20 21 22

76 17 17 15 14 15 14 18 16 16 15 16 15 18 18 17 16 19 17 16 20 20 21 22

*notes played slightly "behind" the beat.

fdbk. pitch: G

D.S. \otimes al Coda II \oplus

(go back to [E])

4. The

77 2 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

78 2 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

79 2 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

80 2 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

On and on South of Heaven

On and on South of Heaven

69 *Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 3 twice (see meas. 53)*

(w/double-time feel)

F#5 (E5)

Gtr. 4 (Hanneman)

73 $1\ 1/2$ full

ff Gtrs. 1 and 2
Rhy. Fig. 5
light P.M. ----- light P.M. ----- light P.M. ----- end Rhy. Fig. 5

Bass Bass Fig. 5 ----- end Bass Fig. 5

(E5) G#5 G5 F#5 (E5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 5 four and a half times (see meas. 73)

full

75 Gtr. 4

12-13-14-12-13-14 12-13-14 12-13-14 12-14-12-14 12-13-13-12 13-15 12-13-12-13-12-15-14-12 15-13-12-13-12 14-12-14 (14) (14)

6 6 6 3 3 3

Bass plays Bass Fig. 5 four and one half times (see meas. 73)

(E5) G#5 G5

77

14-15 17 14-15 17 14(14) 15 14(14) 17-17 15 17-17 15 15-17 15 15-17 17 15-15 17 15-15 17 15-17 17 18 18 17 18 17 18

F#5 (E5) G#5 G5

F#5 (E5) (G5) G#5 G5

2 w/bar 2 w/bar 2

[illegible]

Free Time

w/bar

84 +1

(pull up on bar) (dive w/bar)

Gtrs. 1 and 2
P.M.

*w/fdbk.

*Gtr. 1 fdbk. pitch: B
Gtr. 2 fdbk. pitch: E
Gtr. 3 overdubs fdbk. (pitch: E) a left channel.

Bass

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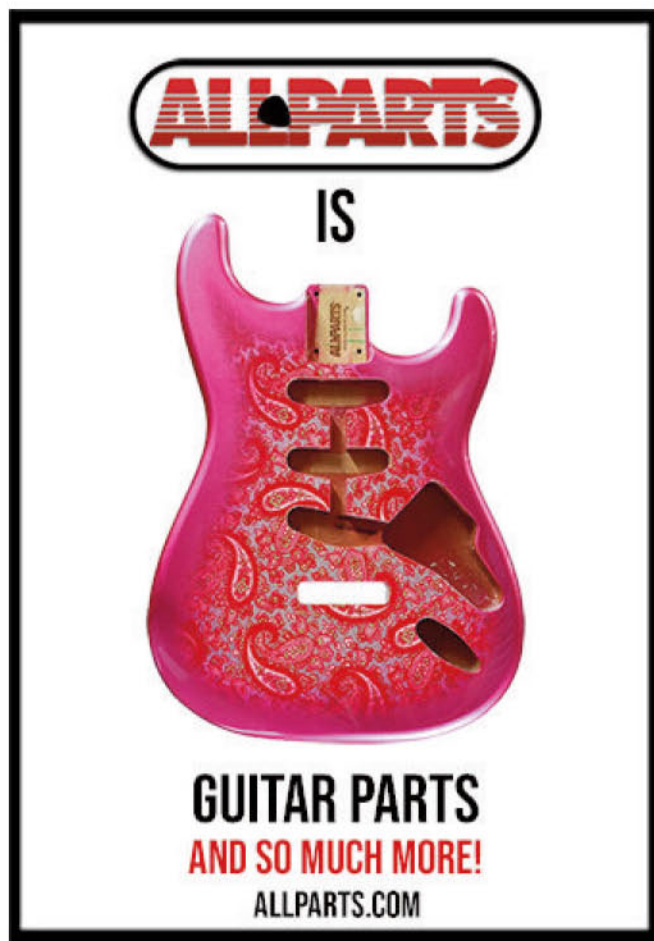


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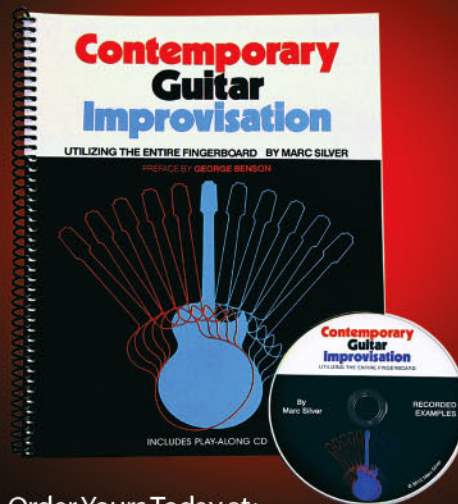
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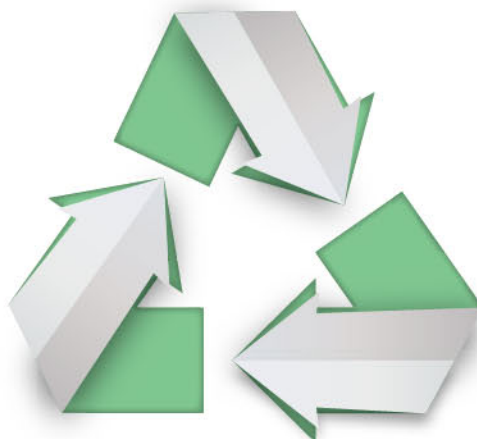
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"COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN"

LED ZEPPELIN | LED ZEPPELIN, 1969 | GUITARIST: JIMMY PAGE | STORY BY CHRIS GILL



FOR DECADES, ALL that tone chasers knew about the mysterious amp that Jimmy Page used to record the first Led Zeppelin album (as well as his legendary "Stairway to Heaven" solo) was that it was a Supro with a 12-inch speaker. In 2019 the mystery was definitively solved when Page, working in partnership with producer/guitar collector Perry Margoueff, loaned his original Supro to amp builder Mitch Colby, who painstakingly duplicated every detail for the Sundragon amp project.

Page's amp was originally a 1959 Supro Coronado 1690T, but it underwent several modifications after it was badly damaged when it fell out of the back of a van while Page was touring with Neil Christian and the Crusaders in the early Sixties. Key modifications made during the repair included swapping the 5V4 rectifier tube for a Mullard GZ34 (which increased B+ voltage), replacing the 12AX7 preamp tubes with Mullard ECC83s (the GE 6L6 power tubes remained, however), changing a handful of components with British parts and replacing the original pair of 10-inch speakers with a single 12-inch speaker that was an Oxford speaker re-coned with a Pulsonic cone. The amp was also biased "cold," which allowed the amp to generate distortion at lower volume levels and distort more heavily at full volume. The end result was a truly unique hybrid of American and British amp technology — no wonder gear hounds searched in vain for so long.

Because Led Zeppelin weren't signed to a record label when they recorded *Led Zeppelin*, the band produced the album on a minimal budget like a demo, using a bare minimum of gear. Page's main guitar on the album was a 1959 Fender Telecaster with rosewood neck. Most of the tonal variation came courtesy of using the Supro's four individually voiced inputs and distance miking. Because the Supro's two channels are wired in parallel, the two volume controls and single tone control are highly interactive, which also expands its tonal versatility. For the solo on "Communication Breakdown," Page used Vox wah set stationary to the full "toe-down" setting to boost the treble EQ.



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- Squier Affinity Series Telecaster with Indian Laurel fingerboard
- Supro Delta King 12 combo
- Vox V845 Classic Wah

TONE TIP: The Sundragon amp and Fender Jimmy Page "dragon" Telecaster provide the ultimate authenticity, but for a hefty investment. The Squier Tele and Supro Delta King (with the Mid control boosted and Drive switch engaged) provides 90 percent of the tone for about 15 percent of the Sundragon/Page Tele's price.



Robert Plant and Jimmy Page onstage in Los Angeles in 1969



ORIGINAL GEAR

GUITAR: 1959 Fender Telecaster with rosewood neck (bridge pickup), Volume: 10, Tone: 10

AMP: 1959 Supro Coronado 1690T (Input: Channel 1 Treble, Volume 1: 10, Volume 2: 10, Tone: 8, Intensity: 0, Speed: 0) with 12-inch Oxford speaker re-coned with Pulsonic cone

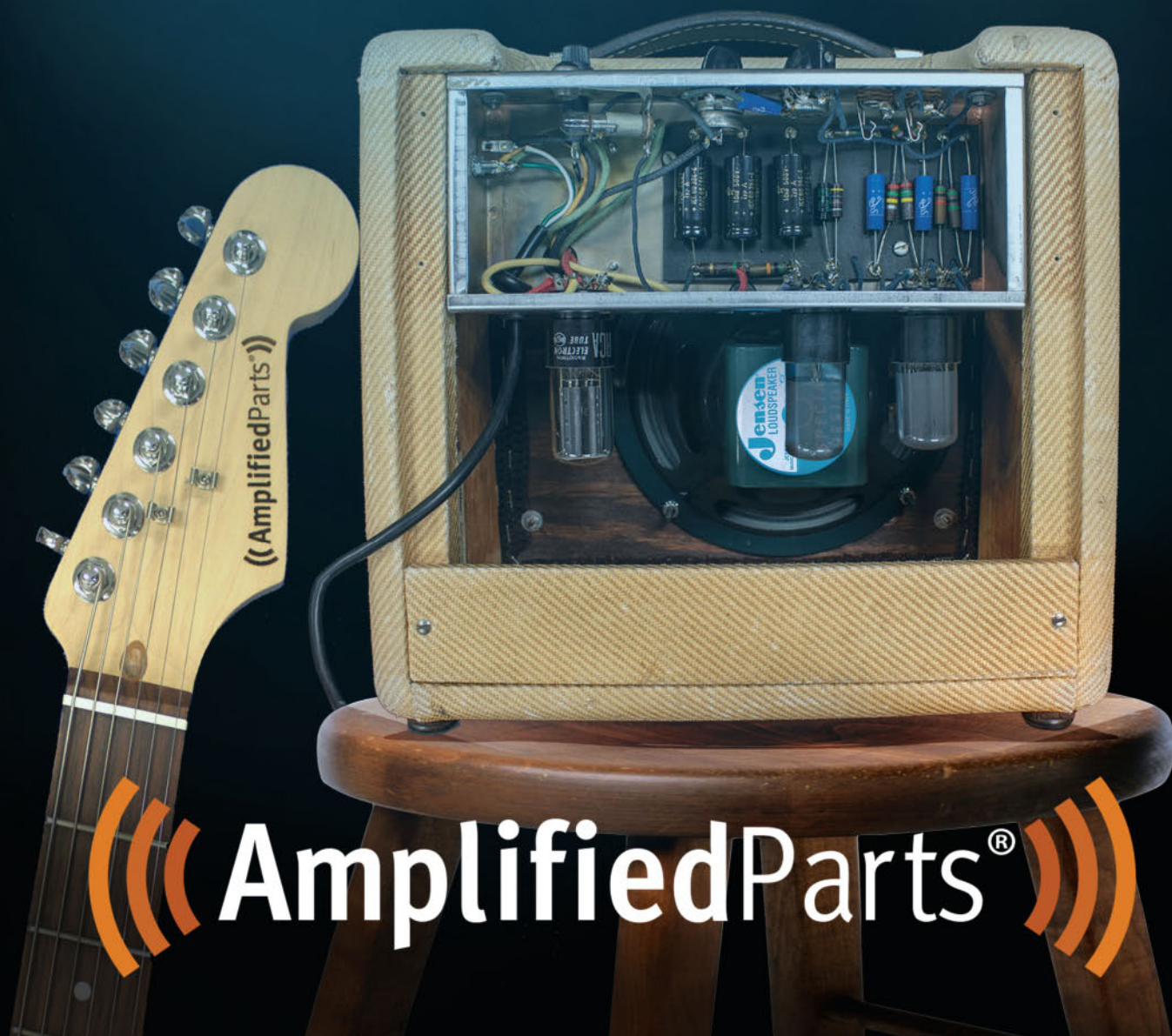
EFFECTS: 1967 Vox wah (stationary at toe-down position, solo only)

STRINGS/TUNING: Ernie Ball Super Slinky .009-.042/Standard

PICK: Herco Heavy nylon grey



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